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# AFRICA IN ANTIQUITY

## I.

### The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan

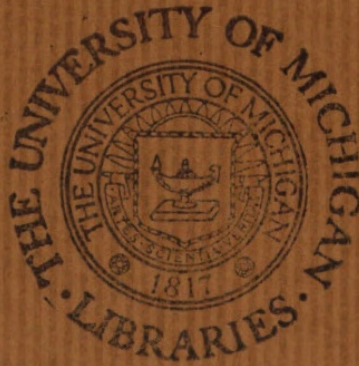


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Cover:

*Details from a two-sided  
votive tablet of King Tanyidamani (Cat. 121),  
Meroitic Period, about 100 B.C.  
(Baltimore 22.258).*

Frontispiece:

*Rock crystal ball with Hathor head (Cat. 93),  
Napatan Period, late eighth century B.C.  
(Boston 21.321).*

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# AFRICA IN ANTIQUITY

The Art of Africa in Antiquity



# AFRICA IN ANTIQUITY

The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan

The Brooklyn Museum, New York, New York  
*September 30-December 31, 1978*

Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington  
*February 15-April 15, 1979*

New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana  
*May 19-August 12, 1979*

Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands  
*September 15-November 11, 1979*



# Contents

	Lenders to the Exhibition	8
	<b>Foreword</b>	
	<i>Michael Botwinick</i>	9
	Abbreviations	13
1	Chapter <b>Geography and Population of the Nile Valley</b> <i>William Y. Adams</i>	16
2	Chapter <b>Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?</b> <i>Bruce G. Trigger</i>	26
3	Chapter <b>A History of Archaeological Research in Nubia and the Sudan</b> <i>Ahmed M. Ali Hakem</i>	36
4	Chapter <b>Nubia before the New Kingdom</b> <i>David O'Connor</i>	46
5	Chapter <b>Egypt in Nubia during the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms</b> <i>Jean Leclant</i>	62
6	Chapter <b>The Kingdom of Kush: The Napatan Period</b> <i>Karl-Heinz Priese</i>	74
	<b>The Kingdom of Kush: The Meroitic Period</b> <i>Fritz Hintze</i>	89
7	Chapter <b>The Ballana Culture and the Coming of Christianity</b> <i>Bruce G. Trigger</i>	106
8	Chapter <b>Medieval Nubia</b> <i>William Y. Adams</i>	120
9	Chapter <b>Ceramics</b> <i>William Y. Adams</i>	126
	Maps	135
	Subject Bibliography	139
	Credits	143

*The index to Volumes I and II begins on page 354 of Volume II.*



## 8 Lenders to the Exhibition

National Archaeological Museum	Athens
The Walters Art Gallery	Baltimore
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum	Berlin/DDR
Humboldt-Universität	Berlin/DDR
Bolton Museum and Art Gallery (Lady Lever Art Gallery)	Bolton
Museum of Fine Arts	Boston
The Brooklyn Museum	Brooklyn
Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire	Brussels
Museum of Egyptian Antiquities	Cairo
Fitzwilliam Museum	Cambridge
The Oriental Institute Museum, The University of Chicago	Chicago
Khartoum University, Department of Archaeology	Khartoum
Sudan National Museum	Khartoum
Karl-Marx-Universität, Ägyptisches Museum	Leipzig
Merseyside County Museums	Liverpool
The University of Liverpool, School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies	Liverpool
The British Museum	London
UCLA Museum of Cultural History	Los Angeles
Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst	Munich
Christos G. Bastis Collection	New York
Mr. and Mrs. Carl L. Selden	New York
Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology	Oxford
The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia
Muzeum Narodowe	Warsaw
National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution	Washington, D.C.
Worcester Art Museum	Worcester

## Foreword

*Michael Botwinick*  
*Director, The Brooklyn Museum*

How many of us accept the rather commonly held notion that the study of the civilizations of the past is a dry and dusty discipline? We come to know the ancient world through the related disciplines of art history, archaeology, anthropology, history, and philology, and these are, after all, difficult, almost arcane fields. We are separated from these subjects by language, culture, and centuries. It is no wonder, considering the obstacles, that we know very little about the ancient world. Occasionally, a single personality will spark our imagination and break through our indifference. But for most of us, the civilizations of antiquity are as unfamiliar as the features of the far side of the moon. And this is our loss.

Nowhere is this more true than in Africa. In modern times, most people have assumed that in Africa the ancient world was limited to Egypt, and that sub-Saharan Africa had no historic past before the Portuguese contact in the sixteenth century. But there is a culture, perhaps as old as historic time itself, set geographically between the pyramids of Egypt and the jungles of central Africa. The cradle of this culture lies at the very confluence of the Blue and White Niles. Neither Egyptian nor African, yet often both, this vigorous culture established itself in a harsh and unyielding environment. Throughout recorded history it lies at the outer edge, first of the ancient world, then at the edge of the Classical world, and then at the edge of the Christian world. It had its own prehistory, its own language, and its own anthropological and artistic development. Even as it stands at the outer edge of the known world, it is also a crossroads. It is a contact and transfer point between Africa and, each in its turn, Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Christianity, and Islam. On this canvas that stretches from the first cataract of the Nile to the foothills of Ethiopia, this culture works out its own destiny — sometimes subjugated and sometimes as conqueror of the lands around it.

How can we fail to be moved by the dramatic course of this civilization? It is ironic that it is barely a pinprick on contemporary consciousness. We speak, after all, not of a civilization that had a brief flashing moment. Nubia flourishes more than five hundred years before the building of the great pyramids of Egypt and continues on after Columbus's voyages to the New World. Nubia is a five-thousand-year heritage. If such a culture rose up today, it would be the year 7400 before it ran its course. And we think of the twenty-first century as the distant future. What are we to think of the seventy-fourth century?

But Nubia should mean more to us than myth, legend, and the fabled kingdoms of Kush and Meroe. There is a legacy of art and knowledge, of the growth of a people in the five-thousand-year course of this civilization. If we are to come to grips with it, to know it in the true sense, it will be the people who organized



the exhibition, *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan*, and the two-volume publication which accompanies the show who will in large measure lead the way.

Nubia as a major field of study has evolved, to a great extent, only within the last twenty-five years. The area was known to the Greeks and Romans, but it gradually faded from Western consciousness during the Middle Ages, when it slipped from the edge of the Christian orbit to become a part of the Islamic world. Not until the 1820s did the first modern European adventurers and explorers enter the region again, and they were followed by others—some seeking knowledge and some treasure in the legendary city of Meroe described by the ancient writers. Two Englishmen, Waddington and Hanbury, published an account of their travels to “Ethiopia,” as the region was then known to Europeans, in 1822, and four years later the Frenchman Frédéric Cailliaud brought out an account of his voyages up the Nile, complete with descriptions, plans, and drawings that are still invaluable today. Later in the decade, Champollion-le-Jeune, the man who had unlocked the secret of Egyptian hieroglyphs, and the Italian Rosellini penetrated up the Nile to a point beyond the Second Cataract and made the first systematic survey of Nubian geography and monuments. In the 1840s came the great German archaeologist C. R. Lepsius, who traveled as far south as the Island of Meroe. His meticulous maps and drawings paved the way for a scientific approach to the study of the cultures of the Sudan. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, as the result of political turmoil in the region, Nubia and the Sudan were cut off from the mainstream of archaeological investigation. As late as 1905, an English journalist could call the Sudan a “land of which . . . we as yet know little.”

Much archaeological activity in Nubia in the twentieth century has been undertaken on an emergency basis. In 1902, the Egyptian government completed the Aswan Dam and thus took the first step—although nobody realized it at the time—toward the ultimate destruction of the Nubian heartland. Each heightening of the dam has been preceded by desperate efforts to record the traces of ancient cultures before they were lost forever beneath the rising waters of the Nile. In 1907, when the government decided to augment the dam for the first time, the American archaeologist G. A. Reisner was asked by the Egyptian Survey Department to conduct a survey of the area to be inundated, and it was his investigations that led to the first systematic classification of the cultures in the region. Before the Nile waters reached their new level, in 1912, scientists from many nations had worked in Nubia, recording and saving whatever they could as the waters slowly rose.

The First World War called a halt to scientific activity in Nubia and the Sudan, and the unsettled economic conditions that peace brought were not encouraging to potential patrons of archaeological

activity—in those days, most of the funds came from private sources. The public was more interested in the spectacular discoveries being made elsewhere—in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, in Palestine and Anatolia. The mistaken opinion persisted that the Nubian remains represented only a debased reflection of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Not until the 1930s, when the Egyptian government again heightened the Aswan Dam, did the archaeologists return in numbers. The great discoveries of this decade were made at two sites called Ballana and Qustul, where the English investigators Emery and Kirwan found the remains of a culture hitherto unknown, and completely unexpected, in the monumental tombs of kings who had been buried with objects in precious metal that matched in beauty and craftsmanship anything known from the ancient world.

The last great salvage operation is familiar to all the world; indeed, many of us know the name of Nubia today only through the wide publicity given the UNESCO-sponsored salvage venture that preceded the building of the Aswan High Dam, which flooded vast areas along the Nile. The campaign to save the monuments of ancient Nubia was an international enterprise, an exercise in cooperation between twenty-five countries from Argentina to Yugoslavia. Its greatest achievement—the dismantling of the rock temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel and its reconstruction high on a bluff above the waters of the Nile—was a triumph of modern engineering in the service of saving the past.

Today, most of Nubia is under water, but its history belongs to all of us. The ancient cultures of Nubia and the northern Sudan will never again be forgotten—thanks to the intrepid nineteenth-century travelers who braved a harsh, inhospitable land, to the Antiquities Service of Egypt, which sent archaeologists to save what they could before the dam builders moved in, to the Antiquities Service of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, whose concern for the cultural heritage of the nation has been responsible and enlightened—and to the people who have contributed to the development of this exhibition and its publication. They are, in a real sense, pioneers in the academic field.

In the wake of the exhibition *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, held in Brooklyn in 1973, Bernard V. Bothmer, Chairman of the Department of Egyptian and Classical Art, The Brooklyn Museum, in conversation with Dr. Steffen Wenig, at that time Associate Curator of the Ägyptisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/DDR, developed the idea of a Nubian exhibition. We owe Bernard Bothmer a tremendous debt of gratitude. It was he who perceived all of the elements to create a fundamentally new period of growth and development in Nubian studies. Those initial conversations with Steffen Wenig, an authority on Nubian and Sudanese archaeology, sparked the growth of this unique and important project. And it took root in both Brooklyn and Berlin.

In 1974, the Menil Foundation, through Mrs. Jean de Menil, awarded a grant which proved to be the building block of the entire project. The grant allowed Mr. Bothmer to visit and study all of the major collections of Nubian antiquities in the United States, Europe, Egypt, and the Sudan. This intensive two-year reassessment of the material provided the data base from which the entire project was created. Bernard Bothmer's energy, vision, and commitment have taken this project through five difficult years of research and preparation. While many have had a hand in this project, the diverse elements of the exhibition, catalogue, and essays all have a sharpness of focus, a sense of direction that is due to his overall direction of the project. His willingness and ability to devote months, even years, to working with Dr. Wenig on the choice of objects for the catalogue, with the authors of the essays on the development of their work, and with colleagues around the world as their ideas and contributions broadened and enriched this project is a perfect example of his contribution to the field of art history and archaeology over the years.

During this phase of the work, additional support generously given by the Bankers Trust Company, Mrs. Jean de Menil, Jack A. Josephson, Mathias Komor, the L.A.W. Fund, the Robert Lehman Foundation, the late Mme Paul Mallon, the Maya Corporation, Mrs. Henry L. Moses, Mrs. Ashton Sanborn, Carl L. Selden, Miss Alice Tully, and Mrs. Lila Acheson Wallace kept the complex and far-flung activities of the project going. We are grateful to those people who insured the proper time and level of preparation for so massive an undertaking.

We must also point out here the fruitful collaborative efforts of our colleagues at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/DDR. The contribution of Dr. Steffen Wenig to this project is immense. His catalogue will surely be a standard reference work in the field for years to come. We are grateful for his knowledge and his dedication. His involvement goes beyond the catalogue, and his ideas and contributions permeate the exhibition. Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Müller, Director of the Ägyptisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/DDR, our colleagues in Berlin worked side by side with us on the development of the exhibition. The exhibition was organized with the scholarly participation of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/DDR. But a personal word of thanks must be given to Dr. Eberhard Bartke, General Director of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/DDR, a colleague and a friend. Without his deep commitment to the ideas of the show, the ideal of scholarly collaboration, and his decisive support in the crucial final stages of preparation, this exhibition would not have reached fruition.

To the contributing authors of the essays we give our thanks for entrusting their ideas and their work to us. By joining together they have greatly increased the accessibility of much important work in the field of Nubian studies. We are indeed grateful to our colleagues,

the directors and curators of all of the institutions in Europe and the United States who have been so supportive in sharing their objects and allowing their inclusion in the exhibition.

The Arab Republic of Egypt and the Democratic Republic of the Sudan are the modern nation-states which encompass portions of the land of Nubia. Our colleagues in Cairo, Dr. Shehada Adam, President, Organization of Egyptian Antiquities; Dr. Victor Girgis, Director, Organization of Egyptian Antiquities; Dr. Dia Abu Ghazi, Director General, Museums of the Arab Republic of Egypt; and Dr. Hassan El Asheiry, Director, The Cairo Museum; and in Khartoum, Dr. Negm el Din M. Sherif, Commissioner for Archaeology and National Museums, Democratic Republic of the Sudan; Dr. Ahmed M. Ali Hakem, Head, Department of Archaeology, University of Khartoum; and Dr. Mohamed Ali Akasha, Chief Curator, Sudan National Museum, have been key elements in assuring that the Nubian treasures of Egypt and the Sudan should be part of this great project and be shared with the world. We note with special thanks the efforts of Dr. Abdel Moneim El-Sawy, Minister of Information and Culture, Arab Republic of Egypt, and Mr. Fuad El-Orabi, First Under Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Information, Arab Republic of Egypt, and The Honorable Bona Malwal, Minister of Culture and Information, Democratic Republic of the Sudan, and Dr. Francis Deng, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Democratic Republic of the Sudan, who, in spite of the great burdens of responsibility they bear, insured the participation of their countries.

We record with pride the patronage of the International Council of Museums and our thanks to Dr. Hendrick Hoetink, President of the Exhibition Committee, ICOM, and Mr. Luis Monreal, Secretary General, ICOM, for their help and support. We hope all will recognize that, without the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, we would not have been able to carry through this project.

Our thanks to John Bullard, Director, The New Orleans Museum of Art; Willis Woods, Director, and Henry Trubner, Deputy Director, Seattle Art Museum; Dr. Th. van Velsen, Director, and Dr. L.J.S. Wijsenbeek, former Director of the Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Netherlands, for their cooperation in organizing the tour of the exhibition.

The preparation of the exhibition, the catalogue, and the logistics of it all has been a large task, and many have labored to see it through. We are grateful to Charles B. Froom, who designed the exhibition brilliantly. A special word of thanks to Jerome J. Lawton, whose role was to execute the complex and demanding exhibition installation. But beyond this, out of his own considerable enthusiasm, he associated himself voluntarily with the entire project and on countless occasions resolved



seemingly insurmountable problems of organization and logistics. Much was accomplished due solely to his efforts.

Over five years, this project has involved almost everyone on the Museum's staff. While we might want to list all two hundred and fifty staff members, it is possible to thank only a few. At one point or another, every member of the Department of Egyptian and Classical Art was called upon to help, and we thank them all. Marie-Thérèse Brincard, Education Specialist, Department of Public Programs and Media, has made a great contribution in the development of the didactic materials and the contemporary Nubian section of the exhibition. Ildiko Heffernan and Gerard Le Francois under the leadership of David Katzive, Assistant Director for Education and Program Development, have developed one of the most comprehensive and rich community services and public programs ever presented for an exhibition. It will surely deepen the public experience and understanding. Our thanks to Beatrice Brailsford, who steadfastly held together the preparation of the didactic material. Our thanks also to Catherine Grimshaw, who

handled the considerable correspondence and communications. Perhaps the most difficult job was given to Floyd Lattin, Coordinator of the Exhibition. His knowledge, his warmth, his willingness, and the sureness with which he has moved effectively through every aspect of this project have earned him the admiration, respect, and gratitude of every one of us. As the demands of the project have grown, he has grown, and we have great pride in what he has accomplished for all of us.

It is a great privilege for all of us at Brooklyn to have been associated with this project. It is, in many ways, an attempt to bring together the finest elements of the museum world. If we have had any success, we will have helped with the rediscovery of a great civilization in the popular imagination, on the one hand, while bringing together the stimulating tools for decades of new scholarship in the field, on the other hand. Such a project as this can serve as a bridge firmly based in both the academic world and the popular world. The collaboration of so many people, on so many levels, from so many disciplines, has given greater meaning to all of our work. We are all grateful for the opportunity.

Bar. — Barkal  
Beg. N. — Begrawiya North  
Beg. S. — Begrawiya South  
Beg. W. — Begrawiya West  
Copenhagen NCG — Ny Carlesberg Glyptotek  
Gen. — Generation  
K — Kerma  
Ku. — Kurru  
Liverpool MCM — Merseyside County Museums  
Liverpool SAOS — School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies  
N — Nuri  
S — Sudan

*Abbreviations used by G.A. Reisner:*

B.P. — Black polished ware  
Bkt. — Black-topped red polished ware  
Blk.W. — Black of local origin, brown on black surface  
R.P. — Red polished ware  
WSR — Ordinary red ware with white slip or wash



*Fig. 1. Relief of Prince Arikankharer smiting enemies (Cat. 125), Meroitic Period, beginning of first century A.D. (Worcester 1922.145).*



I

# Geography and Population of the Nile Valley

William Y. Adams

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In this chapter and those that follow, we shall be speaking of some familiar and some not-so-familiar places: Egypt, Nubia, the Sudan, and Ethiopia. Unfortunately, each of these names can be used with more than one meaning; like many names they have meant different things at different times in history. To further confuse matters, the territories which they describe are to some extent overlapping. Let us begin, therefore, by attempting to define the areas that will be dealt with in this work and in this exhibition.

*Egypt* is both a political and an ethnic and cultural unit, though the two do not precisely coincide. Ethnically and culturally, Egypt means for all practical purposes the valley of the River Nile from its mouth to the First Cataract, about 600 miles upstream, near the modern town of Aswan. It was within this region that the ancient civilization of Egypt arose, more than 5,000 years ago, and until modern times the lower Nile Valley has always been occupied by the same Egyptian people. Politically, however, Egypt has also usually included some neighboring territories occupied by other, non-Egyptian peoples. Today these territories include the Red Sea Hills and coast to the east of the Nile, a part of the Libyan Desert to the west of the Nile, and, most importantly for us, that part of Nubia which lies between the First and Second Cataracts of the river (Fig. 2).

*Nubia* is not a separate political entity in the modern world, although it has often been so in the past. Today this name is applied, as an ethnic and cultural designation, to that part of the Nile Valley which is occupied by speakers of the Nubian languages, about whom we shall have more to say presently. These peoples are the immediate southern neighbors of the Egyptians, and their territory (before its flooding by the Aswan Dams) extended up the Nile from Aswan to a point near the village of Ed-Debba, at the bottom of the great bend of the river (Fig. 3). Today, about one-third of modern Nubia (that part between the First and Second Cataracts traditionally called Lower Nubia) lies within the Arab Republic of Egypt, while the remaining two-thirds (traditionally called Upper Nubia) is part of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan.

In earlier times, Nubian-speaking peoples occupied a much larger area than they do today; as late as the sixteenth century they were found at least as far upstream as the junction of the Blue and White Niles at modern Khartoum. Thus, the name Nubia when used in medieval texts may refer to the whole of the Nile Valley between the modern localities of Khartoum and Aswan.

*Sudan* is the short form of *Bilades-Sudan*, meaning "Land of the Blacks" in Arabic. In its broadest sense, the name has been applied by both Arabs and Europeans to the whole sub-Saharan fringe extending across Africa from the Niger basin to the Red Sea coast. Among the modern nations of post-colonial Africa, however, only the region lying immediately to the south of Egypt has taken Sudan as its official name. This region, known

before 1956 as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, has become, since independence, the Democratic Republic of the Sudan. This is the only Sudan with which we are concerned in this exhibition.

The Republic of the Sudan includes not only the southerly portion of Nubia (Upper Nubia), but many adjoining areas to the east, west, and south. East of the Nile are the higher reaches of the Red Sea Hills and a portion of the Red Sea coast; to the west are the vast steppeland provinces of Kordofan and Darfur. Upstream from Khartoum are the extensive swamplands of the Sudd and, beyond them, the equatorial rain forests of the upper White Nile.

*Ethiopia* is the name taken in modern times by a very ancient kingdom, formerly known as Abyssinia, which occupies the remote highlands to the east of the Sudan. Although this kingdom was already in existence in Classical times, it is important to note that the Aethiopia of Greek and Roman authors (for example, Herodotus, Strabo, and Pliny) is not the Ethiopia of today. The name in Greek means "Land of Burnt Faces," and it was more or less indiscriminately applied to all parts of Africa occupied by dark-skinned peoples. Since the part of inner Africa which was best known to the ancients was Nubia, however, the name Aethiopia appearing in an ancient text usually refers to the Nubia of today. Herodotus, for example, describes the ancient Kushite capital of Meroe as the "city of the Ethiopians." As recently as 1835, the English traveler G. A. Hoskins published an account of his journey through the Sudan (which did not carry him far beyond the site of modern Khartoum) under the title *Travels in Ethiopia*.

#### LANDSCAPES OF EGYPT AND THE SUDAN

The landscape of Egypt is familiar, at least in imagination, to nearly everyone: the broad, sluggish Nile, fringed on either side with palm and acacia groves; the incredibly green fields crisscrossed by countless irrigation canals; and, never far away, the limestone bluffs that mark the margins of the desert and of the Egyptians' world. The landscape of Nubia is in many ways similar, particularly in regard to the central importance of the river. Both countries are, in the words of Herodotus, "the gift of the Nile," without whose waters and annually replenished floodplain no human life or endeavor would be possible in this most barren of all deserts.

The landscape of Nubia is nevertheless a harsher and less attractive one than that of Egypt. Arable land, instead of forming a continuous fertile belt along both sides of the river, occurs in Nubia only in disconnected patches and pockets; elsewhere, the desert sands or the stumps of ancient, worn-down granite mountains extend directly to the water's edge. The smooth flow of the Nile is itself interrupted by cataracts which impede and at times altogether preclude navigation (Fig. 4). These conditions have had much to do with

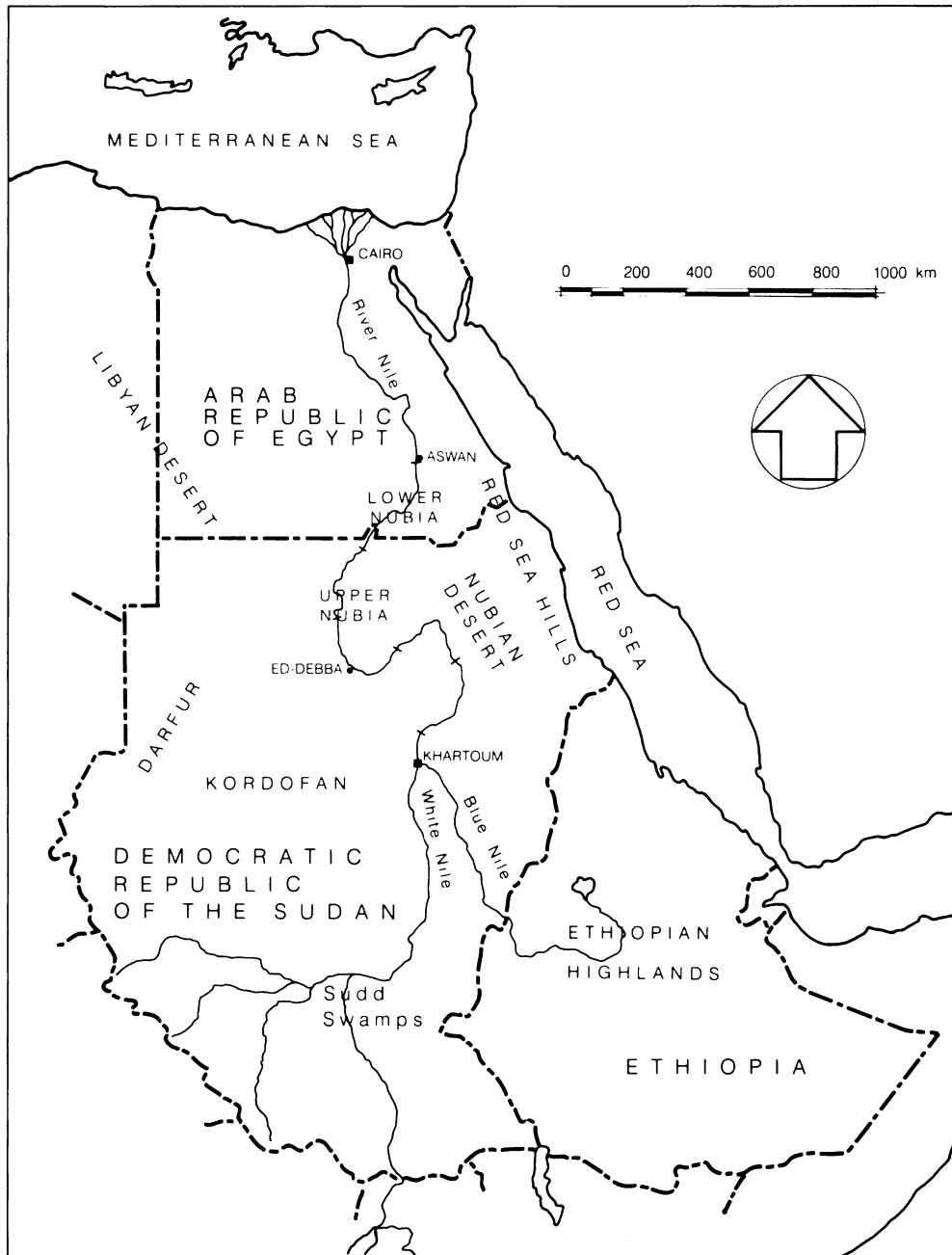


Fig. 2. Political and geographic regions of the Nile basin.

the preservation of Nubian cultural independence over the centuries, for they rendered the region unattractive to foreign colonization, although the Egyptians often annexed parts of Nubia for the sake of its tribute of gold, ivory, and slaves.

The Egyptian and Nubian environments share their total dependence on the Nile for all the necessities of life. Not until one comes nearly to the southern limit of Nubia is there any possibility for human livelihood away from the river's banks. Small amounts



Fig. 3. *The Nile Valley in the vicinity of the Second Cataract.*



Fig. 4. *The Second Nile Cataract, the Batn el Hagar.*

of annual rainfall are first encountered at about the latitude of the Fourth Cataract, and precipitation gradually increases in a southerly direction, to a figure of about eight inches annually in the vicinity of Khartoum. The meager and highly seasonal rains support a scattering of dwarf acacia and, for a short time each year, stands of hardy desert grass along the wadis (dry desert watercourses) of the central Sudan, and these provide a livelihood of sorts for pastoralists who range east and west of the Nile (Fig. 5). As rainfall continues to increase, going southward from Khartoum, semi-desert scrubland gives way to true savanna and grassland and, finally, in the far southern Sudan, to tropical rain forest. Here, for the first time, riverine farming yields to pastoralism as the dominant mode of life.





Fig. 5. The Apedemak Temple at Naqa in the "Island of Meroe," the Butana region.

For the most part, the desert landscapes of Egypt and of Nubia are bleak and featureless, broken only here and there by the denuded skeletons of ancient granite mountains. Progressing eastward from the Nile, however, the land rises gradually but steadily until a somewhat jagged and irregular crest is reached a short distance from the Red Sea shore. From this summit, a precipitous scarp, eroded by many deep canyons, drops away to the parched and almost uninhabitable coastal plain. The Red Sea Hills, as this eroded crest is called, reach elevations of between 5,000 and 7,000 feet and support a fairly dense cover of desert shrubs and trees. This region has been from time immemorial the habitat of the Beja—pastoral nomadic tribes such as the Bisharin and Hadendowa — of whom we shall have more to say presently.

Westward from the Nile there is no comparable rise in elevation. The so-called Libyan Desert stretches away, with few outstanding topographic features, until it is finally terminated by a series of isolated mountain massifs along the far western border of the Sudan. To the south and southwest also, there is only a very gradual rise in elevation until the borders of modern Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia are reached.

#### PEOPLES OF EGYPT AND THE SUDAN

The Nubians, who until recently occupied the Nile Valley between Aswan and Ed-Debba, are the people

who are of most direct concern to us (Fig. 6).

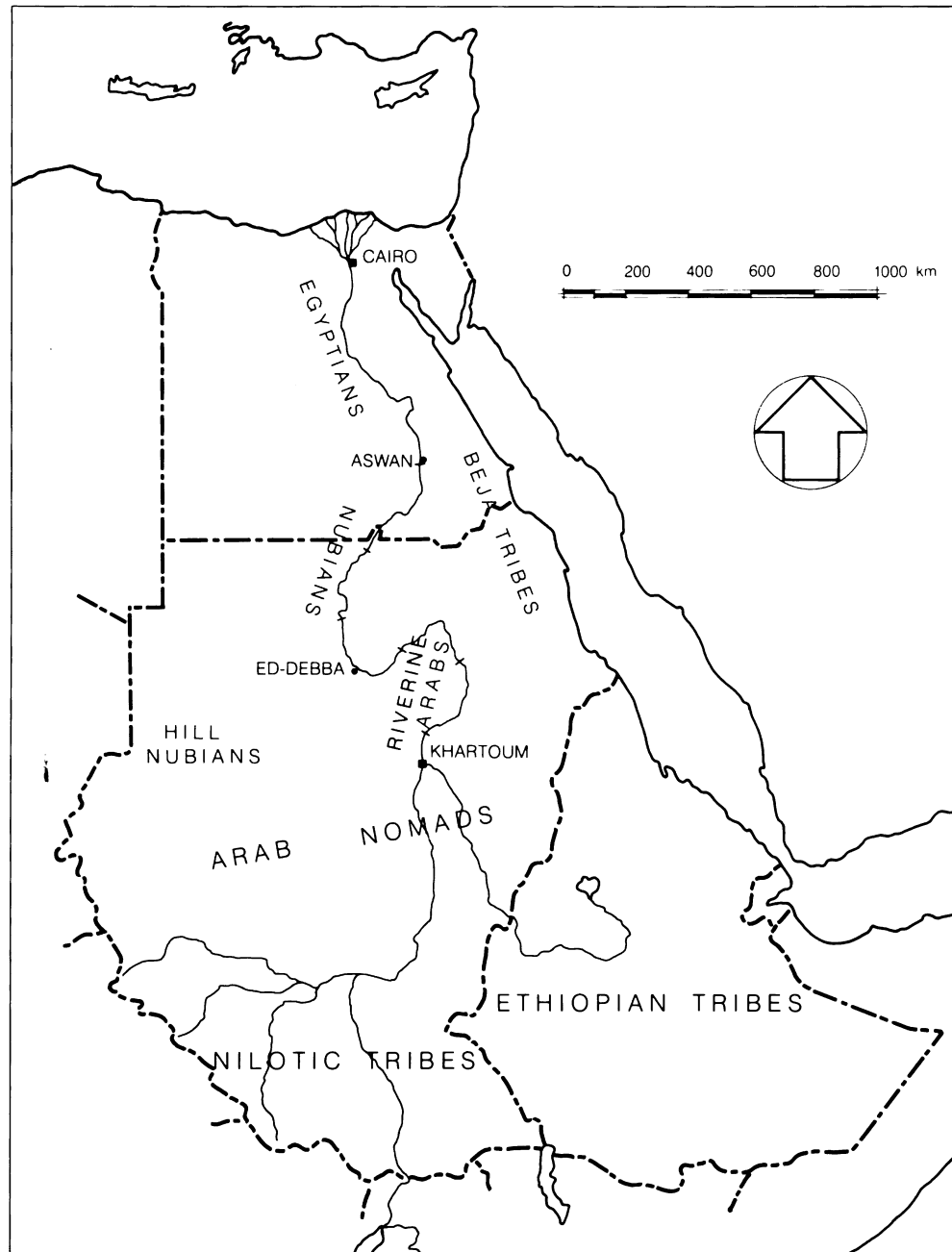
Although their way of life today is little different from that of the Egyptian *fellaheen*, and although like the *fellaheen* they think of themselves in the broadest sense as Arabs, they are readily distinguished from their northern neighbors by their much darker pigmentation, for their ancestry is primarily African rather than Caucasian. This characteristic they share with most of the other peoples of the Sudan; however, the Nubians are distinguished from other Sudanese as well as from the Egyptians by their possession of an ancient language (or, more properly, a group of languages) which is unrelated to the Arabic spoken by their neighbors to the north and south.

The Nubian dialects are distantly related to a great many of the indigenous languages of northeastern Africa, but their only close relatives are some rapidly dying languages which are spoken by tribal peoples in the remote hills of Kordofan and Darfur, west of the Nile. It is now generally believed that the Nile Nubians (those who today dwell along the river) migrated at some time in the past from the more westerly district, where a few of their relatives still remain, but there is no evidence as to when this migration took place. The presence of Nubian-speakers along the river cannot be definitely attested before the eighth century A.D., when the earliest known text in Nubian was written down. Consequently, an earlier generation of scholars

was wont to look upon the Nubians as relative newcomers to the Nile Valley, and to attribute the remains of the older Sudanese civilizations (A-group, C-group, Meroitic, etc.) to other, pre-Nubian peoples. In fact, it was popular at one time to attribute each new cultural horizon to the coming of a new people.

Modern archaeologists, taking account of the obvious cultural continuities from one period to the next, are much more ready to consider the possibility that the ancient inhabitants of the northern Sudan may have been Nubians in the linguistic sense from the beginning. Certainly they were Nubians in the cultural sense, for

Fig. 6. Present populations of the Nile basin.





within the narrow corridor of the middle Nile they developed a distinctive cultural adaptation which has evolved without significant interruption down to modern times. The modern Nubians are, then, the cultural if not specifically the linguistic heirs of the earliest settlers of whom we have archaeological evidence.

The Nubians are unique among all the peoples of inner Africa in that their place in history is almost as old as history itself. Unlike their neighbors, they were not entirely isolated from the outside world by mountains, desert, or ocean; on the contrary, their ancestral homeland along the middle Nile was in ancient times the one feasible route of communication between the Mediterranean basin and the interior of the African continent. Consequently, they were brought into contact with the world's earliest civilizations at a far earlier date than were most European peoples. Centuries and even millennia ago, they made the critical transformations from tribesmen to peasant farmers and from pagans to Christians (and latterly to Muslims), which have sooner or later been the experience of most peoples in the Western world. Not only did they develop, in time, a civilization in their own right, but they were the main channel through which civilizing influences were transmitted to other African peoples and African influences reached the Mediterranean lands. Through all the ebb and flow of cultural influences, however, the Nubians have somehow managed to maintain a distinct ethnic and cultural identity.

Today, the requirements of modern technology threaten what centuries of foreign invasion and cultural transformation could never achieve in the past: the ethnic extinction of the Nubians. The building of dams at Aswan, first in the 1890s and more recently in the 1960s, has drowned and made uninhabitable more than half of their ancestral homeland. Almost half of the surviving Nubian population (estimated today at 200,000) have had to find new homes outside Nubia, at Kom Ombo in Egypt and at Khashm el Girba in the remote eastern Sudan. In both places, the Nubians are in close contact with, and in a sense are surrounded by, other peoples of non-Nubian extraction. In these unfamiliar and threatening surroundings, they have done what they could to preserve their ethnic separateness, but the barrier of isolation which has been their chief protection over the centuries is gone. Presumably they will gradually melt into the detribalized peasant populations of Egypt and the Sudan, leaving their untransplanted kinsmen in the uppermost part of old Nubia as the last true Nubians.

Some consolation may be found in the fact that the extinction of the Nubians is threatened only in a narrowly ethnic and linguistic sense. More broadly speaking, all of the peoples of the modern Sudan are their cultural and historical heirs, for the Sudanese Republic of today rests firmly upon the foundations of those older Nubian states and empires which held

sway over the middle Nile and its hinterland for the best part of 3,000 years. And if the Nubians are now a dwindling minority within the region which they so long dominated, it is in part due to their own efforts in extending their cultural and political hegemony over the many neighboring peoples with whom they now share Sudanese citizenship.

The riverine "*Arabs*" are farming peoples who occupy that part of the Nile Valley which lies upstream from the Nubian frontier at Ed-Debba, and extending to a point well beyond Khartoum. The riverine "*Arabs*" differ from the Nubians in no important respect save that they speak Arabic instead of Nubian. Although they do not acknowledge a Nubian ancestry, but trace their descent from nomadic tribes of the Arabian peninsula, we know that in fact these peoples were speakers of Nubian dialects as recently as 500 years ago. Their linguistic conversion (very probably not the first in Nubian history) is attributable to the fact that their territory, which lies within the Sudanese rainfall belt, was overrun by migrating Arab nomads at the end of the Middle Ages. When these newcomers set themselves up as political overlords along the middle Nile, their language gradually supplanted the native speech. The more northerly Nubians, who were protected from nomadic incursion by the rainless deserts on either side of them, did not have the same close experience of the invaders, and as a result were able to maintain their ethnic and linguistic separateness. We shall, however, use the term "*Nubian*" to refer to the ancestors both of the present-day Nubians and of the riverine "*Arabs*," whose lineage contains very little genuinely Arab blood.

*Beja* tribes are nomadic pastoralists who occupy the higher elevations of the Red Sea Hills, although some groups come down seasonally to the banks of the Nile (Fig. 7). They speak languages of the Cushitic family, which is distantly related both to Arabic and to ancient Egyptian. Primarily herders of sheep and goats, the Beja for the most part wander about in small bands quite unlike the great tribal migrations of Arab nomads. In the past, however, some Beja groups have commanded sufficient military force to represent a serious menace to the riverine farmers. The Beja first appear in history, under the name "*Medjay*," as far back as the Egyptian Old Kingdom (ca. 2400 B.C.), and in the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2000 B.C.) a great fortress called "*Repressing the Medjay*" was built in Nubia by Egyptian overlords. Under the name "*Blemmye*," the Beja are mentioned in a number of late Classical and medieval texts, usually as the perpetrators of raids upon Aswan and the farming settlements of Lower Nubia. In the late Middle Ages they controlled, and at times disrupted, the caravan trade between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea, and as recently as 1883-85 the Hadendowa tribe of Beja was a potent force in the uprising of the Sudanese Mahdi. Their warlike prowess was celebrated by Kipling in his poem "*Fuzzy-Wuzzy*."

Fig. 7. A Beja tribesman, about 1820 (after Waddington and Hanbury 1822).



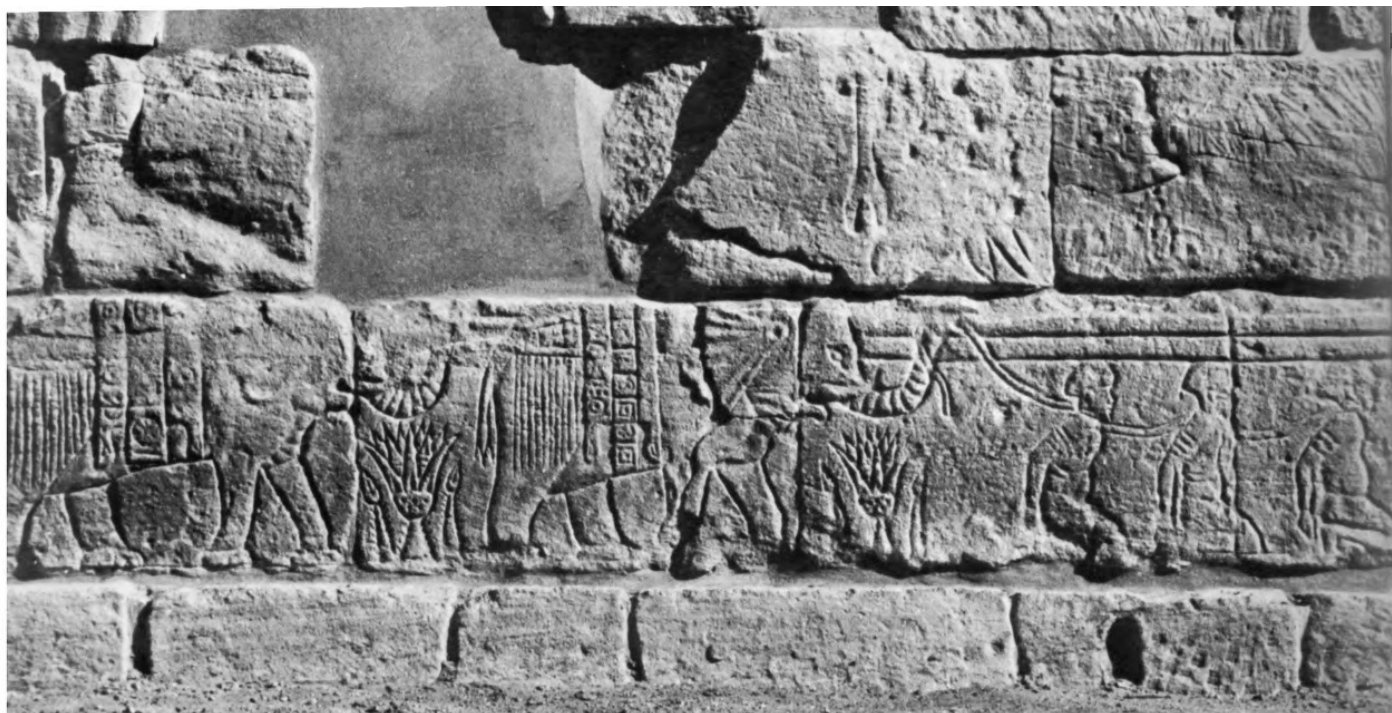
The Beja have thus been at times a major political factor in the history of the Sudan (Fig. 8), even if they have not contributed much to its cultural development. Groups of Beja have, however, settled from time to time among the Nubians and have adopted the agricultural mode of life; they have usually become "Nubianized" and have gradually lost their indigenous speech. The rulers of the Ballana monarchy of Lower Nubia (see Chapter 7) are thought by some scholars to have been of Beja origin.

*Arab nomads*, although politically dominant in much of the Sudan in the recent past, are relative newcomers to this region. A few may have come directly across the Red Sea from the Arabian peninsula, but by far the largest number migrated southward from Egypt in the late Middle Ages to escape the harsh exactions of the Mameluk sultans. Their favored migration route was along the Red Sea Hills, where they met and to a considerable extent mingled with the indigenous Beja tribes. Once they reached the latitude of the Sudanese rainfall belt, the newcomers (unlike the Beja, who rarely strayed far from their ancestral hills) rapidly spread westward to the Nile Valley, and beyond it to the vast steppelands of Kordofan and Darfur. Both along the Nile and in the west they set themselves up as feudal masters over the settled native peoples, with whom they soon intermarried and blended. As a result, the nomad Arabs of the Sudan today are nearly as African in appearance as are the riverine "Arabs," although their proportion of genuinely Arab blood is probably considerably higher. Their influence, small today, was sufficient in the recent past to establish the supremacy both of the Islamic faith and of the Arabic language throughout the central Sudan, even in regions which they did not directly penetrate.

Except in appearance, the nomad Arabs of the Sudan retain many similarities with their kinsmen across the Red Sea. They are divided into numerous tribes, large and small, which preserve their separate traditions as well as their sense of kinship to one another in the form of elaborate genealogies. The Arab tribes east of the Nile, like those of Arabia, are predominantly camel pastoralists, while the so-called Baggara tribes of Kordofan and Darfur are unique among Arabs in that they have become specialists in the breeding of cattle.

*Nilotic tribes* are the very primitive peoples who inhabit the Sudd swamps and the tropical rain forests to the south of them: the Shilluk, Nuer, Azande, Dinka, and countless lesser tribes. Most support themselves by some combination of farming and animal husbandry, though the latter is the only occupation they esteem. Although distantly related, linguistically, to the Nubians, the Nilotic tribes were too remote to be affected by tides of civilization before the middle of the nineteenth century. They are important to our study mainly because their





*Fig. 8. Representation of a Blemmye as a bound captive, on the outer west wall of the Apedemak Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra, 235-218 B.C.*



*Fig. 8a. Detail of Fig. 8.*

culture still preserves many features of the ancient A-group and C-group cultures of Nubia (see Chapter 4), before the influence of Egyptian civilization became predominant in the north.

*Egyptians*, the northern neighbors of the Nubians, have been a continuing presence in Nubia itself almost since the dawn of history. Military expeditions into Nubia are recorded as far back as the Egyptian Dynasty I (ca. 3000 B.C.); by Dynasty IV (ca. 2500 B.C.) there is evidence of an Egyptian mining colony at Buhen, near the Second Cataract. Large Egyptian garrisons were established in the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2000-1800 B.C.) to guard the passage of the Nile through the cataract region, and the outright colonial annexation of the New Kingdom (ca. 1470-1080 B.C.) brought a host of Egyptian civil and religious officials into the southern country. Even after the withdrawal of Pharaonic authority, Egyptian artisans and overseers remained behind in the service of the Nubian kings; their influence can still be detected today, many centuries after the collapse of ancient Egyptian power.

The Christianization of Nubia during the Middle Ages brought in Egyptian clergy and monks, and Egyptian merchants were then also allowed to ply their trades in Lower Nubia. Finally, the colonial annexation of the Sudan by the British in the nineteenth century led to a fresh wave of Egyptian migration. Since the

country's independence, the foreign civil and military officials have gone, but even today Egyptian merchants still play a leading role in the commerce of the Sudan. The Egyptians are important to our story not only because of their influence upon the cultural and political history of the Sudan, but because some of the outstanding archaeological remains of ancient Nubia, such as the Second Cataract fortresses and the great rock temples of Abu Simbel, are attributable directly to them.

*Greeks and other entrepreneurs* are a final group whose presence in the Sudan is noteworthy. The Egyptian recolonization of 1821-22 brought in a host of Greek, Armenian, Syrian, Lebanese, and other merchant venturers, whose descendants still dominate certain trades in the Sudan today. They are not by any means a new element on the scene. As far back as the late Meroitic Period (ca. A.D. 200-400), there is very clear-cut evidence of Greek activity and Greek influence in Lower Nubia and even as far upstream as Meroe. The Nubian Christian church also shows signs of Greek influence, and even used Greek for several centuries as its liturgical language. Since the prosperity of Nubia has always depended to a very large extent on its foreign exports, it should occasion no surprise that the merchant peoples of the eastern Mediterranean have long had a hand in that commerce.

2

**Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?**

Bruce G. Trigger

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Nowhere has the confusion of culturally acquired characteristics with biologically inherited ones produced more bizarre and dangerous myths than in respect to northeastern Africa. In the nineteenth century, scholars, who lacked reliable historical information for many parts of the world, sought to utilize contemporary variations in physical type as a means of reconstructing important aspects of human history. They assumed that as a general rule the more similar two groups of people were physically, the more closely related they were historically and culturally. Early human history was seen as a process of dispersal and differentiation which occurred at the same time and along similar lines in terms of race, language, and culture.

These early racial studies embodied contemporary nationalistic and racial prejudices. In Africa, as elsewhere, they also became a metaphysical justification for European colonization. While the scientific basis for these studies has long been discredited (e.g., Collins 1968), specific ideas and much of the terminology survive and continue to influence interpretations of African prehistory. As a result, any discussion of the physical characteristics of the people of Nubia must begin by reviewing essentials.

The traditional approach to the study of race postulated that at an early period mankind consisted of a number of "pure races." Each of these races was believed to have developed in geographical isolation from the rest, thereby acquiring and preserving its own distinctive and relatively homogeneous physical characteristics. Each race also evolved one or more distinctive language families and its own distinctive cultural patterns. It was never agreed how many pure races had existed, where they had originated, or what precisely each was like. Most physical anthropologists devoted special attention to three races that were variously labeled White or Caucasoid, Black or Negroid, and Yellow or Mongoloid. Each was considered to have occupied one of the three continents of the Old World. The concept of pure races assumed that in the course of time such races had expanded and intermingled to produce the physically "transitional" or "intermediate" populations that are so conspicuous in the modern world. It was also believed that valid procedures could be devised that would allow the characteristics of these original races to be ascertained. This would permit the unaltered descendants of these races to be differentiated from populations resulting from racial mixture, even when the genetic constituents of the latter had been randomly mixed for a long time. As Diop (1962, 461) has observed, the Platonic ideal of pure races became so compelling that it resulted in all real peoples (except perhaps those of one's own nationality) being viewed as belonging to false races.

Today, most physical anthropologists do not believe that pure races ever existed or that human populations generally developed in isolation over long periods.

Physical traits tend to vary in frequency from one region to another. Yet, while one characteristic may increase in frequency from north to south, another will do so from west to east, or from the center to the periphery of its range. This happens because natural selection operates upon specific genes, and individual characteristics are selected for or against at different rates and for different reasons in accordance with a wide range of environmental variations. The adaptive significance of individual characteristics must be understood before the history of these characteristics can be reconstructed. It is therefore meaningless to choose a particular region within a range of continuous variation and to label its inhabitants a race. It is also wrong to assume that a gradient between two extremes of physical difference is inevitably the result of racial mixture. In some cases it may be, but the gradient may also consist of intermediate types that never were more sharply differentiated. Nor, in the absence of historical information or of an extremely detailed physical anthropological record, can it be determined reliably which of these alternatives did occur. Today's concepts of physical variation are so different from the traditional ideas about race that it is probably misleading to use the term "race" in connection with modern studies (Livingstone 1962; Buettner-Janusch 1973, 479-500).

#### THE NILE VALLEY CONTINUUM

The Nile Valley is the only region of Africa where human settlement stretches without a break across the Sahara from the southern shores of the Mediterranean to the center of the continent. Physical types vary in a gentle gradient from one end to the other of this range, the changes being imperceptible from village to village but evident at longer intervals. Factors that influence change include increasing heat and humidity in the south and perhaps socio-economic conditions, such as lower population densities and an increasing reliance on pastoralism. On an average, between the Delta in northern Egypt and the Sudd of the Upper Nile, skin color tends to darken from light brown to what appears to the eye as bluish black, hair changes from wavy-straight to curly or kinky, noses become flatter and broader, lips become thicker and more everted, teeth enlarge in size from small to medium, height and linearity of body build increase to culminate in the extremely tall and thin "Nilotic" populations of the south, and bodies become less hirsute (Brace 1964). All of these people are Africans. To proceed further and divide them into Caucasoid and Negroid stocks is to perform an act that is arbitrary and wholly devoid of historical or biological significance.

In the Nile Valley continuum, the modern Nubians occupy an intermediate position. Their skin color is medium brown, with considerable individual variation. Hair is frizzy or kinky, everted lips are common but not universal, and some people have sharp aquiline features.



Their stature is medium, although perhaps a few centimeters taller than the Egyptian average. Most Nubians are slender, although stout individuals are by no means unknown. In Cairo, Nubians appear as southerners, while in Khartoum, with its inhabitants drawn from all parts of the Sudan, they are not distinguishable from the rest of the northern Sudanese population (Adams 1977, chap. 2).

#### INTERPRETATIONS OF NUBIAN RACIAL HISTORY

Those who think in terms of pure races have interpreted the Nubians as a mixed race that was produced by contact and interbreeding between "Caucasoid" and "Negroid" populations. As early as 1880, C. R. Lepsius suggested that all the populations of Africa could be explained in terms of a "Negroid" stock in the south and a "Hamitic" ("Caucasoid") stock in the north, with a zone of intermixture between them (MacGaffey 1966, 3). It was debated fiercely whether the original population of the Sudan had been "Negroid," with the "Caucasoid" influx coming later (Murdock 1959, 161), or "Caucasoid," with "Negroid" types overrunning the region more recently (Coon 1963, 649-51). Others tended to view the settlement of the Sudan in terms of the more or less simultaneous arrival of Blacks and Whites from opposite sides of the Sahara. Still others assigned the Nubians to a "Brown" race, that nevertheless was generally conceptualized as intermediate between the "Caucasoid" and "Negroid" types. A third category of this sort complicates rather than simplifies dealing with a continuum of variation. The "Brown race" is an ill-defined and mutable concept that at various times has embraced such diverse populations as the circum-Mediterraneans, Dravidians, and other peoples along the Indian Ocean, and the Watusi of central Africa (MacGaffey 1966, 3-4).

Early racial studies of northeastern Africa were further marred by a confusion of race, language, and culture and by an accompanying racism. The most popular of these pseudo-scientific speculations was the so-called "Hamitic hypothesis," which attempted to establish a prehistoric prototype for the White colonization of Africa in the nineteenth century. The prehistoric colonists were identified as Hamites, putatively resembling populations that may still be found in and around Ethiopia. The original Hamites were pictured as being tall, light-skinned pastoralists who were "better armed as well as quicker-witted than the dark agricultural Negroes" who lived to the south and west of them (Seligman in Collins 1968, 126). These qualities allegedly permitted the Hamites to push south and to replace or establish themselves as a ruling class amongst the indigenous Blacks. All centralized governments and cultural advances in sub-Saharan Africa were attributed to these Hamitic conquerors. Where such cultural traits were present and Hamitic languages were not spoken, spurious attempts were made to demonstrate

Hamitic influences. It was sometimes argued that Hamitic overlords had adopted the languages of the conquered Bantu and that their own speech had disappeared without a trace. Some arbitrarily interpreted the mere presence of cattle among any group in sub-Saharan Africa as evidence of Hamitic influence (Murdock 1959, 13). The idea that pastoralists, rather than agriculturalists, were creators and disseminators of a high culture was a curious one, which had been flatly denied as a cultural historical principle elsewhere. It is not surprising that a growing wealth of archaeological, linguistic, and ethnographic data has shown the Hamitic hypothesis to be based on a jumble of erroneous and mutually contradictory evidence (MacGaffey 1966; Greenberg in Collins 1968, 124-32).

The specific interpretations of Nubian cultural history that resulted from the first Archaeological Survey of Nubia (1907-11) portrayed the region as a long-term frontier between the "Caucasoid" and "Negroid" races. The "Caucasoids" were assumed to be biologically superior to the "Negroids," but their success was regarded as less inevitable than in other versions of the Hamitic hypothesis. Nubian history was seen as composed of successive waves of cultural development resulting from an increment in the White component of the population, while "Negroid" migrations into Nubia accounted for the intervening Dark Ages (van Gerven et al. 1973, 555). As the anatomist G. Elliot Smith, who worked with the first Archaeological Survey of Nubia, put it, "the smallest infusion of Negro blood immediately manifests itself in a dulling of initiative and a 'drag' on the further development of the arts of civilization" (Arch. Survey of Nubia, *Bull.* 3, 1909, 25, in Adams 1977, chap. 3). These interpretations of Nubian history had the fluidity characteristic of most racist thinking. The rulers of Kush generally were portrayed as "Caucasoid" ("Hamitic") when Kush was being described as a source of civilizing influences for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, but these same rulers were characterized as Blacks when the region's achievements were considered in relation to those of ancient Egypt. Randall-MacIver and Woolley (1909, 2) had the kings of Dynasty XXV in mind when they wrote: "But soon the unfailing dynamics of race reasserted their force. If a short-lived and unstable black empire has occasionally extended its limits to within view of the Mediterranean, it has ultimately been repelled all along the line."

Elliot Smith and others sought confirmation for these racist theories by demonstrating a positive correlation between changes in culture and in the human skeletal types recovered from the ancient cemeteries of Lower Nubia. Yet they studied only a small number of characteristics and consistently sought physical differences between the peoples of various regions or time periods, while ignoring the similarities. Nor did they enquire whether or not the racial categories that they used as type concepts had any objective validity. Their

methods were so crude that, as Adams points out (1977, chap. 3), they permitted confirmation of any historical theory a physical anthropologist might wish to champion.

#### AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

While hypotheses of racial mixture in northeastern Africa continue to intrigue some physical anthropologists (e.g., Strouhal 1971), a growing number now point out the inadequacies of this approach (Greene 1972; van Gerven et al. 1973). These latter may not wholly reject using skeletal data to trace the human biological history of a region, but they argue that to do this requires far more systematic and detailed information about physical remains than was previously used. Comparative data are required from many locations and over a broad contiguous area before the historical significance of regional variation can be adequately assessed. Furthermore, only evidence from the same time period must be compared. It is potentially misleading to base conclusions about physical relationships upon comparisons between ancient populations in one area and modern ones in another, as was often done in the past. Such a procedure may confuse similarities and differences resulting from historical relationships with ones resulting from the operation of natural selection. It is, for example, far from certain that the assemblage of "Negroid" traits, which were allegedly present in the Badarian culture of Upper Egypt but disappeared in the course of the later Predynastic sequence, is in fact evidence of a sub-Saharan component in the population of ancient Egypt (van Gerven et al. 1973, 557). Interbreeding would distribute genes randomly through a population rather than conserving them in recognizable clusters. It is also far from certain that the traits in question, such as prognathism, which may have to do with the heavy development of the muscles used for mastication, are diagnostic of a specific racial type. They may have been traits that were selected against, as increasing reliance on agriculture altered the diet and therefore the direction of natural selection operating on the population of Predynastic Egypt.

Nowhere in northeastern Africa have sufficient studies been carried out to permit a detailed reconstruction of the physical history of the region. The reexamination of available data by Batrawi (1945-46), Mukherjee, and others (1955, 85) reveals no evidence of significant discontinuities in physical type in the history of Lower Nubia. Instead, their studies suggest that a population with a little-varying and remarkably stable genetic composition has inhabited Lower Nubia from at least 3000 B.C. to the present. The population of the Kerma culture in Upper Nubia was also of this type as, on the basis of limited skeletal evidence from El Kurru, the Napatan population appears to have been. While the greater internal variation from Meroitic times onward may result from more widely ranging contacts, the variation remains considerably less than is attested for

British skeletons of the Christian Era (Batrawi 1945-46, 91). In spite of the historically attested settlement in Nubia of ancient Egyptians, Copts, Arab bedouin, and "Bosnian" mercenaries from the north and of slaves and possible migrant groups from the south, Nubia has retained a physical type that is characteristic of the middle Nile and can most simply be labeled northern Sudanese. It could alternatively be called Nubian, provided that the latter term is construed in a geographical, rather than in a narrowly linguistic and ethnic, sense (Trigger 1965, 17). It is the impression of archaeologists familiar with naturally mummified bodies that in ancient times the physical type of Nubia was much the same as it is today in the northern Sudan (Shinnie 1967, 154-55).

Physical anthropological evidence is extremely fragmentary for the period prior to 3000 B.C. It therefore does not constitute a sample upon which firm conclusions may be based. Limited skeletal material from the Early Khartoum culture has been compared with finds from West Africa (Chamla 1968). It may be typical of a highly successful hunting and gathering population that was widely distributed in the sub-Saharan savanna belt in the sixth millennium B.C. The Khartoum skeletons have been labeled "Negroid," but Coon (1963, 651) describes them as being essentially similar to those of modern Nubians. The skeletal material from the still earlier sites at Gebel Sahaba (ca. 10,000 B.C.) and Wadi Halfa (ca. 6000 B.C.) has been variously described as "Caucasoid," "Sudanese Negro," or even hesitatingly "Boskopoid," that is, related to the modern Bushman population of southern Africa (Anderson 1968; Greene—Armélagos 1972; Rightmire 1975). There is, in fact, no evidence to rule out the existence of a Nubian-type population in the remote past, and it is also possible that, over the centuries, this population, which was open to gene flow from all sides, was less radically altered by natural selection than were the geographically more remote and isolated populations of northern Europe and West Africa.

It is hazardous to build arguments on presumed correlations of race, language, and culture. Nevertheless, linguistic and cultural data support the notion of long-term stability of population in Nubia. During historical times, much of eastern and northern Africa and adjacent parts of southwestern Asia have been occupied by people who speak languages belonging to various branches of the Afro-Asiatic stock: Semitic, Omotic, Cushitic, ancient Egyptian, Berber, and Chadic (Fig. 9). Although it is not known where this linguistic stock originated or to what degree its spread was the result of migration or diffusion, it appears that its differentiation and spread took place after 6000 B.C. (Greenberg 1966 and cited in Trigger 1968, 74). It is also clear that the Bantu languages, which belong to the Niger-Kordofanian stock, have spread from the Cameroon Highlands over much of central and southern Africa only during the past 2,000 years. The earlier history of the

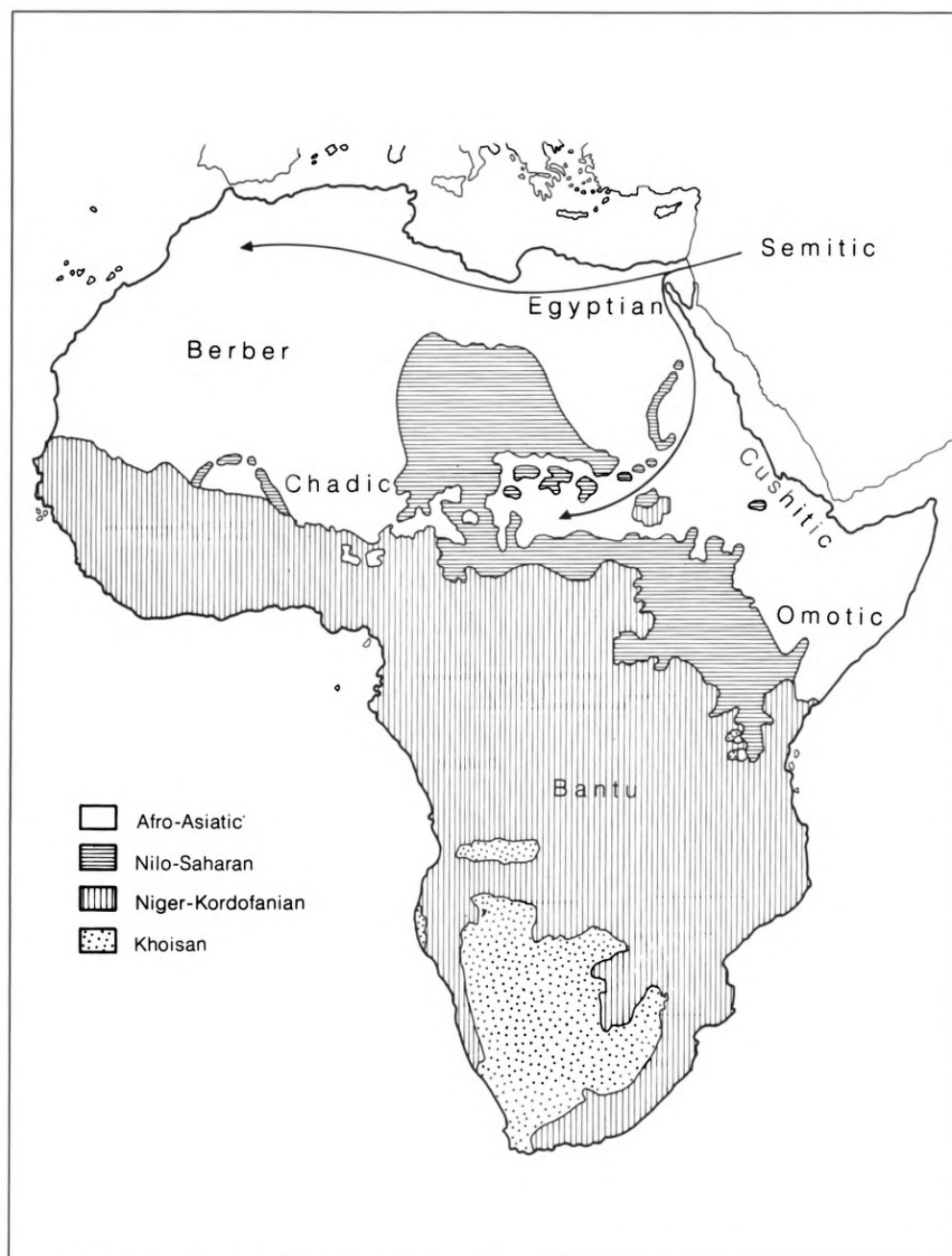


Fig. 9. Distribution of African language stocks.

Niger-Kordofanian stock seems to have been associated mainly with West Africa. Sandwiched between these expanding language groupings is Greenberg's putative Nilo-Saharan stock. Nilo-Saharan languages are not found elsewhere, and this linguistic grouping appears to

be of great antiquity in the central and eastern portions of the sub-Saharan savanna region. It has been speculated that some of the differentiation of Nilo-Saharan was associated with the development of pastoralism in the south-central Sahara in the sixth or seventh millennium



B.C. (McHugh 1974, 21). Prior to the spread of Arabic, certain Nilo-Saharan languages were distributed widely in the northern part of the Republic of the Sudan. These include the Nubian languages. Various lines of evidence suggest that all the Nubian languages, including those presently spoken in the Nile Valley (which make up the Nile Nubian subdivision of Nubian) may have originated in the Kordofan-Darfur area, where the three other major subdivisions of Nubian are still spoken. The relatively minor differences between the two Nile Nubian languages also suggest that these languages may not have begun to spread out in the Nile Valley before the first millennium A.D. This makes it seem likely that the ancestral form of this language arrived in the Nile Valley no earlier than the Meroitic resettlement of Lower Nubia (Trigger 1966).

Fig. 10. Wooden models of Nubian and Egyptian soldiers, from the tomb of Mesehti at Asyut in Middle Egypt, about 2100 B.C. (Cairo CG 257).



Yet ancient Egyptian records suggest that Nubian or a closely related language may have been spoken in Nubia during the New Kingdom (Priese 1973). If so, this language or group of languages would have shared Upper Nubia with Meroitic, which was the official written language of Kush after 200 B.C. Priese (1974) speculates that Meroitic originally may have been spoken in the Shendi region while Nubian was spoken in the Dongola region and perhaps northward. Meroitic does not appear to have been a Hamitic language (Hintze 1955). It may have been a Nilo-Saharan language or another of which no cognate survived after it was overwhelmed by Nubian in the fourth century A.D. All the evidence suggests, however, that such replacements of spoken languages as have occurred within the Sudan in ancient times involved an interplay of languages that were indigenous to the region. This, in turn, suggests a general continuity of population. It cannot be ruled out, however, that some Nubian groups may have spoken Hamitic languages such as are still current east of the Nile. These too are local languages and do not necessarily imply any corresponding physical or cultural differences.

Until recently, archaeologists have studied primarily the acquisition of elements of Egyptian and Mediterranean culture by the Nubian upper classes. Not only were these accretions of alien origin, but their continuity was radically affected by political shifts within Nubia. By contrast, long-range continuity is evident in the material culture of the ordinary people of Nubia and among the tribal peoples of the adjacent savannas. Continuities in pottery styles are evident from the earliest appearance of ceramics in this area, among the cultures of the Early Khartoum complex, as early as 6000 B.C. Closely related ceramic types were widely distributed along the southern fringes of the Sahara at that time. Similar stylistic unity characterized a geographically somewhat less extensive assemblage of cultures related to the C-group which flourished in Nubia and to the east and west of the Nile Valley around 2000 B.C. Related pottery is still manufactured in Nubia and the central Sudan today (Adams 1977).

#### EVIDENCE FROM ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS

Artistic representations also suggest a regional continuity in physical type. Junker (1921) was the first to note that during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, when direct Egyptian contacts appear not to have extended much farther south than the Third Cataract, only Nubian types were portrayed by Egyptian artists (Fig. 10). These are shown with chocolate brown or occasionally black skin, as compared with the red brown normally used for Egyptians (Fischer 1961). They also have frizzy hair and often wear distinctive clothing, but their facial features are mostly the same as those of Egyptians. There is, of course, no need to follow Junker in identifying these Nubians as Hamites (MacGaffey 1966, 5-6).





Fig. 11. Group of prisoners from the south, from the Memphite tomb of General (later King) Horemheb, about 1335 B.C. (Bologna 1887).

Fig. 12. Agricultural scene with Nubians and Egyptians, from the tomb of Djehutyhotep at Debeira East, about 1480 B.C. (Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).



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In the New Kingdom, when Egyptian rule extended above the Fourth Cataract, a more southerly African type was frequently portrayed. These southerners are shown with black skin, everted lips, and prognathous jaws (Fig. 11). Many scenes display mixed groups of black- and brown-skinned people. A plantation scene from the tomb of the Dynasty XVIII Nubian prince, Djehutyhotep, at Debeira in Lower Nubia (Fig. 12) portrays brown-skinned people perhaps of local origin working alongside black-skinned individuals from farther south (Säve-Söderbergh 1960, pl. XVb-c, fig. 10). By contrast, battle scenes that show Egyptians attacking a mixed throng of black- and brown-skinned foes seem to utilize the two types as symbols of all southerners rather than to portray highly diverse and racially polarized communities. Later, Egyptian artists preferred the (to them) more exotic southern features as a stereotyped representation of all Nubians. The bound figures that symbolize Nubia at the entrance to the Great Temple of Abu Simbel are of this type (Fig. 13). This does not, however, seem to apply to individual portraits. Contrary to Junker's opinion, the representation of the prostrate Hekanef, Prince of Miam, in the tomb of Huy, Tutankhamen's Viceroy of

Nubia, although colored black, is that of a typical Lower Nubian, not a southerner (Fig. 14; Junker 1922, 131; Drenkhahn 1967, 33). Some of the southerners portrayed by the Egyptians appear to be tall and linear, resembling modern Nilotes. These probably came from the southern Sudan.

Likenesses of individuals in Napatan-Meroitic official art tend to be variable, the features of royal and divine figures often being influenced by Egyptian canons (Cats. 70, 72, 75-82, 85; Russmann 1974; Menil 1976). In general, however, this art portrays an Upper Nubian type in which, not surprisingly, more southern features seem to occur than in earlier Egyptian likenesses of Lower Nubians. Yet, although a Nubian prince is shown with a pronouncedly southern physiognomy on the stela of the Assyrian king Essarhaddon from Sinjirli (Fig. 15), this is surely not a portrait but a stereotyped Assyrian representation of an African. Similar features are evident in the exotic representation of a man attacked by a lion on a Meroitic ceramic vessel from Faras (Cat. 232). In spite of their stylization, the *ba*-statues from the late Meroitic cemetery at Karanog display a wide variety of facial types (Cats. 151-160), which suggest that at least the upper classes of

*Fig. 13. A group of bound southerners at the base of the second colossus of Ramesses II at the Great Temple of Abu Simbel, 1290-1224 B.C.*







*Fig. 14. Nubian nobility in a procession, from the tomb of Huy, Viceroy of Nubia under Tutankhamen, at Western Thebes, about 1340 B.C.*

*Fig. 15. Captive son of Taharqa before the Assyrian King Essarhaddon, about 670 B.C. (Berlin/DDR, VAM 2708).*



this important northern outpost may have had strong familial as well as economic ties with Egypt.

The Nubian princes and bishops portrayed in the Faras frescoes conform even more strikingly to recognizable modern types, largely because of their more naturalistic style. Bishop Kyros may have "average" Nubian features, while Bishop Petros (Cat. 292) is darker skinned and less hirsute and Bishop Marianos (Fig. 93) is lighter skinned, has a broader face, and is more hirsute (Dinkler 1970, pls. 4, 7, 9). These variations may reflect, in part, the far-flung origins of the officials of a church that recruited its staff from a large part of the Nile Valley and possibly beyond.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It has been noted that in recent years "the field of race history has been virtually abandoned by anthropologists" (MacGaffey 1966, 1). There has also been growing skepticism that traditional racial classifications can serve any scientific purpose or are based on valid concepts. The people of Nubia are an indigenous African population, whose physical characteristics are part of a continuum of

physical variation in the Nile Valley. Yet they are by no means homogeneous. This population has occupied the middle portion of the Nile Valley throughout recorded history and probably for much longer. There is no evidence to suggest that it is the result of a mixing of different racial stocks. If such mixing occurred, it happened so long ago as to be of no historical significance for the period covered in this volume.

The people of Nubia lived in a harsh environment that supported only a small population. Unlike the situation in Egypt, pastoralists, with their disruptive nomadic way of life, outnumbered riverine cultivators. In spite of this, the valley dwellers maintained lively economic and cultural contacts with the north and were able to draw upon their own experience to evolve institutions that preserved their autonomy and sophisticated culture over long periods. This suggests a talented and resourceful population. Whatever intrinsic interest studies of human physical types may have, they can explain nothing about such social and cultural developments.



3

**A History of Archaeological Research  
in Nubia and the Sudan**

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**B**efore the decipherment of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs in the early nineteenth century and the subsequent development in Egyptian studies, knowledge about the civilization of Nubia and the Sudan was obtained chiefly from the writings of the Greeks and Romans, of Byzantine ecclesiastics, and especially of Arab historians and travelers. The periods covered by these sources included the Meroitic and the Medieval, Christian and Muslim, and the accounts of the lands south of the First Cataract and the peoples inhabiting them were based largely on tradition. The development of archaeological investigation has opened to us new areas of understanding. Most of all, archaeology has revealed to us the earliest civilizations of the Upper Nile, whose existence was unsuspected until modern times. On the following pages the history of archaeological investigation in this part of the great African continent will be surveyed.

#### ANCIENT TRADITION

The Sudan was known to the Greeks almost from the time of their first appearance in history. As early as the Homeric age, the Greeks used the term *Aethiopia* (meaning "Land of Burnt Faces") to describe not only the territory south of Egypt but most of Africa. The words "Ethiopia" and "Ethiopian," as they occur in early literature, have no specific ethnic or geographical connotation; the term "Ethiopian" was never applied exclusively to the Meroites, but because these people possessed certain characteristics which the Greeks associated with "Ethiopians" writers of the Classical era included them among the Ethiopians and called their homeland *Ethiopia* (Fig. 16).

It is in only a slightly more specific sense that Herodotus wrote about Ethiopia in the Sudan, describing its geographical extent and its relations with the Persians, who conquered Egypt in 525 B.C. The Ptolemies, through close contact, were a little better informed about the region that lay south of Egypt; they acquired some knowledge of the customs of the people, their kings and their court traditions. This information has come down to us in the writings of Diodorus Siculus (ca. 40 B.C.) and Strabo (ca. 30 B.C.), who quote earlier authors. The Greek tradition was inherited by Latin writers, including Seneca (ca. A.D. 10-40), Pliny the Elder (A.D. 24-79), and many others, down to the third century A.D., whose works sometimes add important information. Christian and Jewish authors also wrote about the Kingdom of Meroe; particularly valuable are the works of Josephus (first century A.D.) and Julius Africanus (ca. A.D. 220), who quoted extracts from Manetho's lost history of Egypt, probably written early in the third century B.C., in which Dynasty XXV was referred to as an "Ethiopian" dynasty.

Before the arrival of Christian missionaries, Olympiodorus (307-280 B.C.), Priscus (fl. ca. A.D. 100-125), and Procopius (A.D. 527-65) wrote about Nubia, its

relations with the Romans and with the Blemmyes in the east (see pp. 22, 24). The competition between Christian sects for the official conversion of Nubia and the Sudan has been preserved by John of Ephesus, a sixth-century historian, in a well-known ecclesiastical history that describes the political division of the country into the three kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria, and Alwa and discusses the Blemmyes, who are also mentioned in later Byzantine and Alexandrian sources (Vantini 1970, 49ff.).

After the Arab conquest of Egypt in A.D. 641 and the subsequent spread of Islam, Nubia and the Sudan became a recurring theme of Arab writers, who offer a considerable body of information about Nubia, which by their time included Makuria and Alwa, that is, the area from Aswan to south of Sennar. This medieval Arabic literature includes chronicles, biographies and encyclopaedias, travelers' accounts, topographic studies, and treatises on various subjects (Hassan 1967, 182ff.).

As Arabicization and Islamization continued, the Sudan was steadily absorbed into the Islamic world, until finally a Muslim kingdom replaced the last of the Christian kingdoms at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This was the Funj Sultanate of Sennar, which lasted until 1821 (Crawford 1951). From this period, a not inconsiderable body of local Sudanese tradition was made available in Arabic to early nineteenth-century European scholars. These Arabic works include tribal genealogies, the *Funj Chronicle*, and a biographical dictionary of Muslim holy men, which contains important information about men of learning and poets, as well as about the social, cultural, and religious life of the Funj kingdom (Mohammed Wad Dayfallah 1800).

#### EXPLORATION

In 1821, Mohammed Ali, the ruler of Egypt, sent his Turko-Egyptian armies into Nubia to pursue and destroy the last of the Mameluks, who had escaped the massacre he had arranged for them in Cairo. His troops pushed south to conquer the Sudan and put an end to the last vestiges of the Muslim Kingdom of Sennar. With the conquering army came European adventurers and travelers, who had been fascinated by the Classical accounts of "blameless Ethiopia" and the legendary city of Meroe, with its gods, its marvelous civilization and strange customs. Since their descriptions, plans, and drawings are frequently the only records of monuments that have since been destroyed, the reports of these European travelers are invaluable to modern scholarship.

The long period of European exploration began with Frédéric Cailliaud, whose accounts of the antiquities and monuments of the Sudan were published in three volumes in 1826 (Fig. 17). Other travelers followed Cailliaud, including the Frenchman Linant de Bellefonds, who visited Nubia and the Sudan in 1821-22, but whose account of his travels was not published until more than a century later (1958). At around the same time, Waddington and Hanbury explored the Sudan

and brought out a journal of their travels (1822). Lord Prudhoe traveled in Egypt and Nubia in 1828, and brought back to England many antiquities, but no published record of his experiences survives. These explorers were followed in 1832-33 by G. A. Hoskins, who published his *Travels in Ethiopia* in 1835; he also left unpublished portfolios of drawings made during his journey, which are now in Oxford.

These early voyagers drew the attention of European scholars to the Sudan, and they were followed by expeditions that were better equipped to study and record its monuments. A joint French-Tuscan expedition headed by Champollion-le-Jeune and his Italian colleague Rosellini explored Egypt and Nubia in 1828-29, penetrating the Nile Valley to a point beyond the Second Cataract and making the first systematic survey of its geography and its monuments, which was published in folio volumes by Rosellini in 1832-44, some years after Champollion's untimely death.

A German expedition led by C. R. Lepsius in 1842-45 (Fig. 18) advanced farther south to the "Island of Meroe" and produced numerous maps, drawings, and squeezes, which were published in the giant folios of his *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* in 1848-59. Lepsius' vast knowledge, combined with the skill and meticulousness of his draftsmen, made this work a landmark in Nubian studies and paved the way for a scientific approach to the study of the cultures, particularly the Meroitic culture, of the Sudan.

The next great advance in Meroitic studies was made in 1862, when five large granite stelae and fragments of others were accidentally discovered in the ruins of Gebel Barkal (Reisner 1921a). The main conclusion derived from the study of these stelae was that Meroe was a debased echo of a superior Egyptian civilization. However, they provided an insight into the theocratic character of the kingship and the historical division into Napatan and Meroitic phases (Erman 1907, 198-99).

Not long after this discovery, Nubia and the Sudan were cut off from the main stream of archaeological investigation as a result of the Mahdist revolution of the 1880s and 1890s.

#### BRITISH POLICY IN THE SUDAN AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES

The year 1898 was a turning point in the history of archaeological research in the Sudan, especially in Nubia and particularly in Lower Nubia, for it was then that the Sudan passed from its short-lived independence (1881-98) under the Mahdi and his successor, Khalifa Abdullahi, into the colonial period under the condominium of Britain and its nominal partner, Egypt. British archaeologists, mainly Egyptologists, were encouraged to visit the newly acquired land. The best known of these travelers was Sir Wallis Budge



Fig. 16. Dark gray marble head of an African, probably from Asia Minor, second century B.C. (Brooklyn 70.59).

of the British Museum, who visited the Sudan from 1897 to 1905 and published his accounts in two volumes (1907). Budge's detailed descriptions of the existing monuments included summaries of the writings of earlier travelers. He also undertook casual digging and exploration, particularly at the royal cemeteries of Gebel Barkal and Meroe, with the aim not of proper excavation but of acquiring material for the British Museum at a low cost in time and labor. Budge (1912) also produced English translations of the Napatan inscriptions of important kings, such as Piye (Piankhy), Tanwetamani, Aspelta, Harsiyotef, and Nastasen.

Still, the Sudan remained largely unknown. A book by the journalist John Ward, published in 1905, states: "I have collected illustrations of these antiquarian remains, hoping to awaken an interest in the ancient civilization of this land of which though it has accidentally come under the influence of the Pax Britannica we as yet know little." It was only gradually that the British public came to realize the importance of the monuments of the Sudan.





Fig. 17. Pyramid of Queen Amanishakheto, late first century B.C., in the North Cemetery at Meroe, as it appeared before it was dismantled by Ferlini in 1834 (after Cailliaud 1826).

The British administration nevertheless continued its encouragement of archaeologists. J. W. Crowfoot, who had accompanied Budge in his travels, was later given responsibility for the administration and care of the antiquities of the Sudan. Another British Museum official, P. D. Scott-Moncrieff, followed Budge in the winter of 1905-06 and did clearance and conservation work at the fort of Buhen (Scott-Moncrieff 1907). He also made a tour of the Butana sites and published an article (1908), giving descriptions of the reliefs at Naqa and Musawwarat es-Sufra, drawing attention to their un-Egyptian character and pointing out certain Greek influences upon the native artistic styles. Finally, Crowfoot himself made a tour of inspection of all sites to record and assess the work under his charge (Crowfoot 1911).

Such visits and publications had a great effect. Archaeologists began to be attracted to the Sudan for its own sake, not merely as an afterthought to work in Egypt. A. H. Sayce was among those who took the opportunity to study in the Sudan; on invitation by the

Governor General, Sir Reginald Wingate, he traveled up the Blue Nile to Roseires and up the White Nile to the Sudd. Then he made a camel tour of the archaeological sites at Naqa, Musawwarat es-Sufra, Meroe, and finally Gebel Barkal. Thanks to Sayce's enthusiasm and effort, J. Garstang was chosen to lead an excavation at Meroe sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of Liverpool between 1909 and 1913 (Fig. 19).

The great philanthropist Sir Henry Wellcome, who combined good works with archaeology, formed the famous Wellcome Expedition for the excavation of Gebel Moya (1911-14) and also contributed to the financing of Garstang's Meroe excavation. F. Ll. Griffith (Fig. 20), who worked for a while with Garstang, became convinced of the importance of Sudanese studies and began independent work first at Faras (1910-12), as leader of the Oxford Expedition in Nubia, and then at Sanam Abu Dom (1912-13), opposite Gebel Barkal/Napata (Griffith 1921-26). Encouraged by his discoveries, he shifted his work later (1930-31) to Kawa, opposite Old Dongola (Macadam 1949; 1955).





Fig. 18. Carl Richard Lepsius (1810-84), the first to undertake a study of the cultures of the Sudan (after a copy of a portrait by Reinhold Lepsius, Berlin/DDR).

Fig. 19. John Garstang excavating the Royal Baths at Meroe, 1912.



However, world events prevented the conclusion of all these expeditions and blocked the development of archaeological research in the Sudan. Expeditions had always depended mainly on private donors, but economic conditions changed after the First World War, and donors were no longer forthcoming. Moreover, the general public was attracted by spectacular discoveries elsewhere—in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Anatolia. As a result, the three Nubian expeditions failed to follow up their work, which was postponed from one year to the next, and no final reports were written by the original excavators. It was only in 1949 and 1955, due to the efforts of M.F.L. Macadam and L. Kirwin, that Griffith's excavation at Kawa has been published posthumously; Wellcome's work at Gebel Moya and other sites has been edited by O. G. S. Crawford and F. Addison (1951; Addison 1949). The rest is still recorded only in the original field notes preserved in the archives of various institutions.

The excavations conducted by G. A. Reisner (Fig. 21), sponsored by Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, were an exception which proves the persistence of Reisner and his colleagues and their devotion to their work. After a first season with the Archaeological Survey of Nubia (1907-08), Reisner shifted his activities farther south. His first aim had been to follow up J. H. Breasted's report (1908, 51ff.) on the presence of a town of Akhenaten at Sesebi. However, as a

result of a recommendation by a local official, Reisner decided to dig at Kerma instead. There he found an important occupation site with associated extensive and astonishingly rich cemeteries, bringing to light a hitherto unsuspected culture in Upper Nubia, the Kerma culture, which he dated to the time of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom and later.

Undeterred by the First World War, Reisner moved to Gebel Barkal (1915-16), where he excavated the great temples of Barkal and the two groups of pyramids. At the same time, he continued the excavation of the royal cemetery at Nuri, which contained the burials of Taharqa and of all but three of his royal successors down to Nastasen, thus covering the period between 690 B.C. and 300 B.C. Reisner then extended his work to El Kurru, where he excavated the royal tombs of Kashta, Piye (Piankhy), Shabako, Shebitqo, Tanwetamani, and their predecessors back to the ninth century B.C. Finally, he continued the excavation of the North, South, and West cemeteries of Meroe. With this work he completed the excavation of all the royal cemeteries of Kush, which present a continuum from the ninth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. Furthermore, between 1928 and 1932, Reisner excavated a series of Egyptian forts south of the Second Cataract: Shalfak, Uronarti, Mirgissa, Semna, and Kumma.

Reisner worked out a chronology of the Sudan for about fourteen centuries and established a cultural



Fig. 20. Francis L. Griffith at Kawa during the excavations of the Oxford Expedition in Nubia, 1929-31.

Fig. 21. George A. Reisner, whose work, sponsored by Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, laid the foundation for the study of Nubian history.





sequence divided on archaeological evidence into Napatan and Meroitic periods. He did not publish final reports of his excavations, except for Kerma. However, thanks to his collaborators, particularly Dows Dunham, and to the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, most of his excavations in the Sudan have been published posthumously (Dunham 1950; 1955; 1957; 1963; 1970; Chapman — Dunham 1952; Dunham — Janssen 1960).

#### SUDAN ANTIQUITIES SERVICE

The investigations described above resulted in an ever-accumulating body of material, although the majority of excavated objects went abroad. The Sudan government was forced to face the problem of organizing an appropriate administration to meet the responsibilities created by this cultural heritage and to allocate funds for its maintenance. In 1903, the government had declared that nothing could be done in the field of archaeology (Cromer 1906, 153), and the legal and executive powers pertaining to the disposal of antiquities were entrusted to the Governor General, then the head of the Sudan government. However, in 1904, some of these powers were delegated to J. W. Crowfoot, Assistant Director of the Education Department of the Sudan government, who was asked to start an Antiquities Service in his spare time and without any budgetary provision. An area was reserved in Gordon Memorial College for "exhibits of objects of antiquarian interest."

In 1905, the first law was passed that regulated archaeological work and prohibited the illicit transport of or dealing in antiquities in the Sudan. This was the Antiquities Ordinance, which created a Board of Museums and established the position of Acting Conservator of Antiquities. But the holder of this position was regarded as a part-time incumbent, who continued to occupy another governmental post. Both P. Drummond (1908-21) and F. Addison (1921-31) served as Acting Conservators of Antiquities and were also staff members of Gordon Memorial College (the nucleus of the present University of Khartoum), while G. W. Grabham (1931-39), a government geologist, combined the office of conservator with his other duties. However, the responsibilities of the position grew so complex that at last it was decided to establish a full-time permanent post. Consequently, at the beginning of 1939, the post of Commissioner for Archaeology and Anthropology was established and attached to the Education Department. A. J. Arkell became the first to hold that office; after his departure in 1948, he was succeeded by P. L. Shinnie. During this period, the antiquities, which had remained in the corridors of a building of Gordon Memorial College, were transferred to a nearby house, which had been converted into an archaeological museum, and the Antiquities Service was enlarged to include an assistant commissioner and two antiquities officers.



Fig. 22. Colossus of a god on the Island of Argo, probably third century B.C. (after Cailliaud 1826; now Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).

The first step toward Sudanization was taken with the appointment of Sudanese antiquities officers, including T. H. Thabit and N. M. Sherif. In 1951, a new Antiquities Ordinance was passed, and 1955 saw full Sudanization of the Service, with J. Vercoutter acting as foreign expert; he was succeeded in turn by Thabit and Sherif. The past twenty years have witnessed greater changes. The Khartoum National Museum was opened officially in 1972. At about the same time, the Antiquities Service successfully embarked upon the greatest archaeological task that ever befell such a young institution, the launching and successful completion of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.

All these changes and the rapid growth of the Antiquities Service have greatly encouraged archaeological work in the Sudan and have made possible the launching of large-scale campaigns in Nubia. Foreign expeditions now find easy access to, and assistance from, an official organization that facilitates their undertakings.

It is worth mentioning here that there is a general awareness of the importance of the cultural heritage of their country on the part of all Sudanese. The authorities of Gordon Memorial College (now the University of Khartoum) created a Research Fellowship in Archaeology, to which O. H. Myers was appointed in 1947. He undertook the first archaeological expedition conducted by an academic institution from within the Sudan when he began to excavate the prehistoric site of Abka near Wadi Halfa (Myers 1948). Finally, in 1963, a Department of Archaeology was created at the University of Khartoum, which is now undertaking the teaching of archaeology at different levels and conducting





Fig. 23. Ruins of the Great Enclosure at Musawwarat es-Sufra (after Hoskins 1835).

excavations at several sites in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan.

Under the able management of the Sudan Antiquities Service, much archaeological work has been undertaken in the area south of Egyptian Nubia. Several expeditions have engaged in prehistoric investigation. Beginning in the early 1940s, A. J. Arkell dug two Neolithic sites at Khartoum and Esh-Shaheinab (Arkell 1949a; 1953); he also made a preliminary report on Khor Abu Anga Paleolithic (Arkell 1949b) and noted the presence of similar sites in many areas along the Nile north to Kareima as well as along the River Atbara. Two additional Neolithic sites are now under investigation north of Khartoum: the Kadero Neolithic is being examined by a Polish team (Krzyżaniak 1974; 1975), while at Abu Geili an Italian team led by M. Puglisi is excavating an interesting site which seems to represent an even earlier phase of the Neolithic. Along the White Nile, D. Clark has led a team from the University of California at Berkeley, excavating at several sites between Geteina and Gebel Moya. These investigations have produced interesting data on the relationships of the cultures of the Gezira to others around Khartoum and, further north, in Nubia. In the far west, the University of Khartoum is conducting a small-scale survey to locate prehistoric sites near Wadi Howar in northern Darfur, in an attempt to test the hypothesis of a Nile Valley connection. As a follow-up of its work on the prehistory of Nubia during the salvage operation (see p. 45), Southern Methodist University of Dallas, Texas, has carried out investigations on prehistoric sites between Ed-Debba and Korti.

A Swiss expedition led by C. Maystre excavated on the Island of Argo (Fig. 22) and is again excavating the Kerma area with startling results in the occupation site of the Western Deffufa and the cemetery. On Sai Island, the French team of J. Vercoutter is excavating a Kerma site of Pharaonic times, in which material belonging to other periods has also been found. M. Schiff Giorgini is now bringing to a successful close her campaigns at two sites: the New Kingdom temple of Soleb and its associated cemetery, which also includes early Meroitic remains, and the nearby site of Sedeinga with its early Meroitic tombs dated to the time of Taharqo and its New Kingdom temple.

At Gebel Barkal, S. Donadoni, head of an Italian expedition, is working on the Meroitic occupation. In 1958, Vercoutter and Sayed T. H. Thabit started excavating the Meroitic town of Wad Ban Naqa, bringing to light an important royal palace, temples, and other buildings dating from the first century B.C. on. Between 1960 and 1970, the German expedition from Humboldt University, led by F. Hintze, excavated one of the greatest sites in the Sudan, Musawwarat es-Sufra (Fig. 23). The University of Khartoum has been excavating the Meroitic capital city since 1966 under P. L. Shinnie and the present writer; it is also surveying and excavating sites on the West Bank of the Nile, north of Omdurman.

P. L. Shinnie, former Commissioner of Archaeology, after completing the Egypt Exploration Society's excavation at the New Kingdom site of Amara West with W. Fairman, conducted a series of excavations of Christian and Medieval Period remains at Soba, Ghazali, and the pre-Christian site of Tanqasi. Recently, the Polish expedition, after concluding work at Faras, which produced sensational discoveries, transferred its activities to Old Dongola with no lesser results. Finally, the West German Expedition of Hamburg University, led by H. Ziegert, is conducting an archaeological survey around Gebel Marra in western Darfur and has collected much information about the Medieval Period and the Funj Sultanate. The Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, has started a project of recording early Funj mosques and *gubbas*, tombs of Muslim saints.

#### ASWAN DAM

The building and subsequent heightening of the Aswan Dam had a far-reaching effect upon archaeology in Nubia. The first dam was completed in 1902, and in 1907 the Egyptian government decided to increase its height. This meant that the area along the Nile between the First Cataract and Wadi es-Sebua would be affected and that many sites in these areas would disappear under water. The Antiquities Department of Egypt became concerned, and the Director General, Sir Gaston Maspero, himself visited the area in 1904 and 1905 to assess the work to be done. As a result,

he produced a report on the Nubian monuments and their condition (1911), which initiated a series entitled *Les Temples immergés de la Nubie*, which was published by the Egyptian Antiquities Service. Thus, between 1911 and 1915, a number of temples belonging to different eras of Nubian history from the Pharaonic, Roman, and Meroitic periods were studied by English, French, and German scholars, including the temples of Bigeh, Dabod, Kalabsha, Dendur, Dakka, Wadi es-Sebua, Derr, and Amada. The epigraphic, iconographic, and architectural details recorded in these studies were of great importance to Egyptology; they not only increased our knowledge of the history of Nubia during the Pharaonic and much later periods but also emphasized the importance of Nubia in the history of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Maspero can also be credited with initiating another form of archaeological investigation, namely archaeological surveying, when he commissioned A. Weigall to conduct a series of surveys in Lower Nubia. Weigall made the first survey in 1906 (Weigall 1907), using surface observation in an attempt to locate and describe antiquities, cemeteries, and other remains, and to put them into chronological order. He drew attention to the distinctive Nubian culture, the C-group, which Petrie called the Pan-grave culture. His remarks and notes proved to be of great importance to later scholars (Emery 1965,38).

However, the most thorough archaeological survey, the one which was to affect most profoundly the development of archaeological investigation in Nubia, was directed by Captain H. G. Lyons, who came not from the Egyptian Antiquities Service but from the Ministry of Public Works. In 1907, when the Egyptian government decided to increase the height of the Aswan Dam, Lyons, then Director General of the Survey Department, chose Reisner to conduct an archaeological survey of the area to be inundated. The results of Reisner's work laid the foundation for the study of Nubian history, its cultural phases and social groups. The able archaeologists who worked with Reisner included C. Firth, A. Blackman, and O. Bates as assistant archaeologists, and G. Elliot Smith and D. Derry as physical anthropologists. Although both Reisner and Elliot Smith left the survey during the second season (1909), the work went on until 1911.

The major accomplishment of this team was the recording and excavation of forty-four cemeteries and a few important fortresses, in particular Ikkur and Kuban, in the area between the First Cataract and Wadi es-Sebua that was affected by the first heightening of the Aswan Dam in 1907-12. Reisner observed the variations in the cemeteries and gathered these variations into groups, each cultural group designated by a letter of the alphabet. (For an explanation of Reisner's sequence, see Vol. II, pp. 12-13.) Thus was developed the Nubian cultural sequence: A-group, B-group, C-group,

and so forth (a few letters were wisely left unused to be applied to future discoveries). This sequence, which has withstood the test of time, is essentially parallel to the known cultural sequence in Egypt, but the parallelism is chronological only; the Nubian "groups" are different and local in nature.

Concurrently with the work of the Archaeological Survey, other foreign expeditions were active in the field. Staffed by the University of Pennsylvania, the Eckley B. Coxe, Junior, Expedition to Nubia excavated the site of Areika in 1907; in 1908-10, it worked in the Meroitic cemeteries at Karanog and Shablul, and published a survey of churches in Lower Nubia by G. S. Mileham (1910). The Coxe expedition also worked at the site of Buhen, investigating primarily the New Kingdom remains and a Middle Kingdom Egyptian cemetery. At Aniba, the Ernst von Sieglin Expedition of Leipzig began work on the Egyptian fort and cemeteries of the Middle and New Kingdoms, as well as a large Nubian cemetery nearby (Steindorff 1935; 1937). Finally, the Vienna Academy sponsored an expedition, led by H. Junker, to excavate the C-group cemetery at Kubanieh North (Junker 1920a); in 1910-11, this expedition shifted its activities south to Toshka and Arminna (Junker 1925; 1926). All this work contributed greatly to the consolidation of Reisner's scheme, which became firmly established as the accepted framework for the history of cultures in Lower Nubia.

Other factors in addition to the First World War affected archaeological work. The main objective of the Archaeological Survey had been achieved, before the floodwaters resulting from the heightening of the dam had reached their new level in 1912. The areas submerged were beyond recovery, and those that remained were out of further danger. Since there was no longer the same urgency, efforts could be directed elsewhere, southward in particular, and archaeologists could study and publish the results of their work. An important report, published in two articles by S. Clarke (1916) and A. Gardiner (1916a), was the study of the Egyptian fortifications between the First and Second Cataracts, particularly near the frontier area of the Second Cataract.

Survey work was resumed in Lower Nubia after the First World War, when it was decided to increase the height of the Aswan Dam yet again. This time, the Egyptian Antiquities Service entrusted the survey to W. Emery and L. P. Kirwan, assisted by a group of young Egyptian field archaeologists with Dr. A. Batrawi as anatomist. The work was carried out between 1929 and 1934 and included the area between Wadi es-Sebua and Adindan on the northern Sudanese border. The survey produced very little evidence to alter the picture of Nubian cultural history already established by the first survey; but the excavation begun by Firth at the fort of Kuban was completed before the site was destroyed by rising water and, perhaps the most spectacular contribution of this project, the great tombs of



X-group kings were discovered at Qustul and Ballana.

During this time, U. Monneret de Villard carried on Mileham's earlier work on the churches of Lower Nubia and described the plans and locations of various Christian ruins, including monasteries, churches, town sites, and cemeteries (Monneret de Villard 1935-57). The only other non-governmental expedition working in Lower Nubia at this time was the German expedition at Aniba. Then came the Second World War, which brought archaeological work in Nubia to a standstill.

#### THE NEW HIGH DAM AT ASWAN

In 1959, when it became evident that the proposed Aswan High Dam would flood vast areas along the Nile from Aswan to the Island of Dal south of the Second Cataract, UNESCO issued an appeal to the nations of the world for help in rescuing the Nubian past from oblivion. The result of this appeal was immediate and gratifying: more than a score of expeditions were at work in Nubia before the floodwaters rose. They included archaeological teams from Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Ghana, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, the four Scandinavian countries, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and of course the two host countries, Egypt and the Sudan.

The salvage operation began with surveys, some of which are now being extended to areas beyond the reach of flooding (Fig. 24). The Antiquities Service of the Sudan acted promptly and initiated projects for surveying and recording on both banks of the Nile from Faras southward; as early as 1955 a Franco-Sudanese team led by J. Vercoutter, then Commissioner of Archaeology in the Sudan, had begun investigations that were later expanded and completed by other bodies, including the Scandinavian Joint Expedition, the New

Mexico and Colorado Prehistoric Expedition, and the Sudan Antiquities Service Expedition, led by W. Adams, H. Nordström, and A. Mills, which extended the survey south of the Second Cataract to Dal and the Batn el Hagar; this work is now being carried farther south by a Franco-Sudanese team headed by A. Vila (1975; 1976) and F. Gaus.

In Egyptian Nubia, the Egypt Exploration Society undertook a survey in 1960-61 on behalf of the Egyptian Antiquities Service in areas not covered by the concessions of other expeditions. This survey, under the direction of H. S. Smith, had fruitful results (Smith 1962), as did the surveys conducted under the auspices of UNESCO.

The most sensational results of the Nubian salvage operations are widely known. The great triumph of modern engineering exemplified in the cutting of the rock temples of Ramesses II from the cliff at Abu Simbel and their reconstruction on a height beyond the reach of the waters of the newly created Lake Nasser is known throughout the world. But all too few of the archaeological findings have as yet been published, although these, in their way, are as important as the engineering feats of modern times.

The Nile Valley between the First and Second Cataracts is now probably the most thoroughly investigated region in the world. When the results of the expeditions that have worked in the area are analyzed and assessed, they should complete and perhaps alter our picture of the beginnings of civilization in Nubia and the Sudan and lead to new investigations and new understanding of the vast continent of Africa.

Before it disappeared under water, Nubia was the scene of international cooperation in salvaging a past that belongs to all humanity. As is amply demonstrated by the present exhibition, international cooperation continues. Thanks to the organizers and lenders, Nubia still lives.



Fig. 24. Dismantling of the Temple of Buhen, near the Second Cataract, during UNESCO's International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.

4

**Nubia before the New Kingdom**

David O'Connor

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A purely descriptive survey of Nubian cultures prior to the New Kingdom does little more than establish that they functioned at very different levels from that of contemporary Egypt. Comparison reveals a classic contrast between a culturally advanced, "dominant" civilization — the Egyptian — and the less advanced, "subordinate" Nubian cultures. Historic Egypt had a complex socio-economic organization of considerable sophistication, a well-documented and elaborate set of religious beliefs and practices, and stylistically rich, technically accomplished art forms. Ancient Nubian life is less easily reconstructible, but it is clear that in general the peoples of the region were organized in loose tribal units rather than in a "state," had a relatively simple religious life (at least to judge from its expression in surviving material remains), and were severely restrictive in the expression of their aesthetic abilities and ideals. When relatively sophisticated art forms do appear in Nubia during the late second millennium B.C., they are clearly dependent, to considerable if varying degrees, upon Egyptian models in style, function, and technique.

However, the survey gains in depth and interest if one keeps in mind certain questions which are particularly relevant in the context of this volume. Given the proximity of Nubia in Egypt, the long history of contact between the two cultures, the comparative smallness of the Nubian population, and the relative inflexibility and inferior quality of its resources, why did Nubia — and especially Lower Nubia — not become much earlier a mere extension of Egyptian culture? The answer lies in the River Nile, which was long the only practicable route between Egypt and the African hinterland; the First Cataract of that river, at Aswan, has been a major ethnic and linguistic divide throughout recorded history. In the time span of interest to us here, distinctive Nubian cultures persisted to about 1600 B.C. in Lower Nubia and even later in the Wadi Halfa/Second Cataract area and beyond. Further, why — despite their cultural tenacity — did the Nubians "fail" to develop a well-defined set of indigenous art forms and finally assume Egyptian modes of artistic expression? The implications of this problem are not negative; historical and ethnographic records reveal a number of relatively complex societies that did not, for a variety of reasons, produce what we would consider advanced art forms (statuary or at least substantial three-dimensional forms, large-scale painting or relief work), and the adoption of alien art forms can be a stimulus to the development of indigenous art. Nevertheless, in terms of any specific group, such as the Nubians, the question is of considerable interest.

First, however, the basic documentation on the Nubian cultures must be outlined. Archaeologically, the history of human activity in Nubia can be traced

back to Paleolithic times, but for our purposes we shall concentrate upon the fourth to the middle of the second millennium B.C. The data fall into two, not always easily reconcilable sets; for the entire span we have the archaeological record of both Egypt and Nubia, and for its last 1,500 years we have Egyptian textual references to Nubia and the Nubians. The basic cultural, chronological, and topographical facts provided by these data are summarized in Fig. 25, which is largely self-explanatory and requires only a brief commentary.

Looking at the general pattern of Nubian cultures, we must remember that we are dealing primarily with assemblages of material objects. Each "culture" is an assemblage of structures and artifacts sufficiently unique in typology and stylistic treatment to be easily distinguished from the assemblages of other "cultures." Each has been assigned an identifying name, either a simple letter or that of a type site, and is set into a relative chronology that is at least approximately related to the established dynastic chronology of Egypt. With this in mind, it can easily be seen that material culture in Lower and Upper Nubia and adjoining regions was much more diverse than in contemporary Egypt, a reflection of important political and perhaps ethno-linguistic differences within the Nubian habitat.

Even in prehistoric times, a uniform material culture (Naqada I-II) was increasingly characteristic of Upper and Middle Egypt, and by the end of the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2635 B.C.) cultural uniformity typified the entire country. In contemporary Nubia, there was a gradual spread southward of Egyptian *material* culture (its ethno-linguistic significance being quite uncertain) until it abutted against other material cultures which had been simultaneously developing in the Wadi Halfa/Second Cataract region. These were in part related to an indigenous Lower Nubian culture of the preceding period, but they were also linked, via certain Upper Nubian cultures, to a great central Sudanese cultural region. The abutment generated an interactive process between Egyptian and Nubian material cultures, from which developed the first distinctively Nubian assemblage to be found throughout all Lower Nubia, the A-group.

Upper Nubia during the A-group period is not well documented, but one thing is clear. Thereafter, Lower Nubian cultures belonged to the same *general* cultural horizon (despite distinctive differences in detail) as those of Upper Nubia, and both were, in a broad sense, essentially outliers of central Sudanese cultures. This fact, combined with ethnic and linguistic differences between Egyptians and Nubians evident from Dynasty VI (2290-2155 B.C.) on, and probably antedating it considerably, contributed decisively to the cultural tenacity of the Nubians.

# PREHISTORIC • EARLY HISTORIC

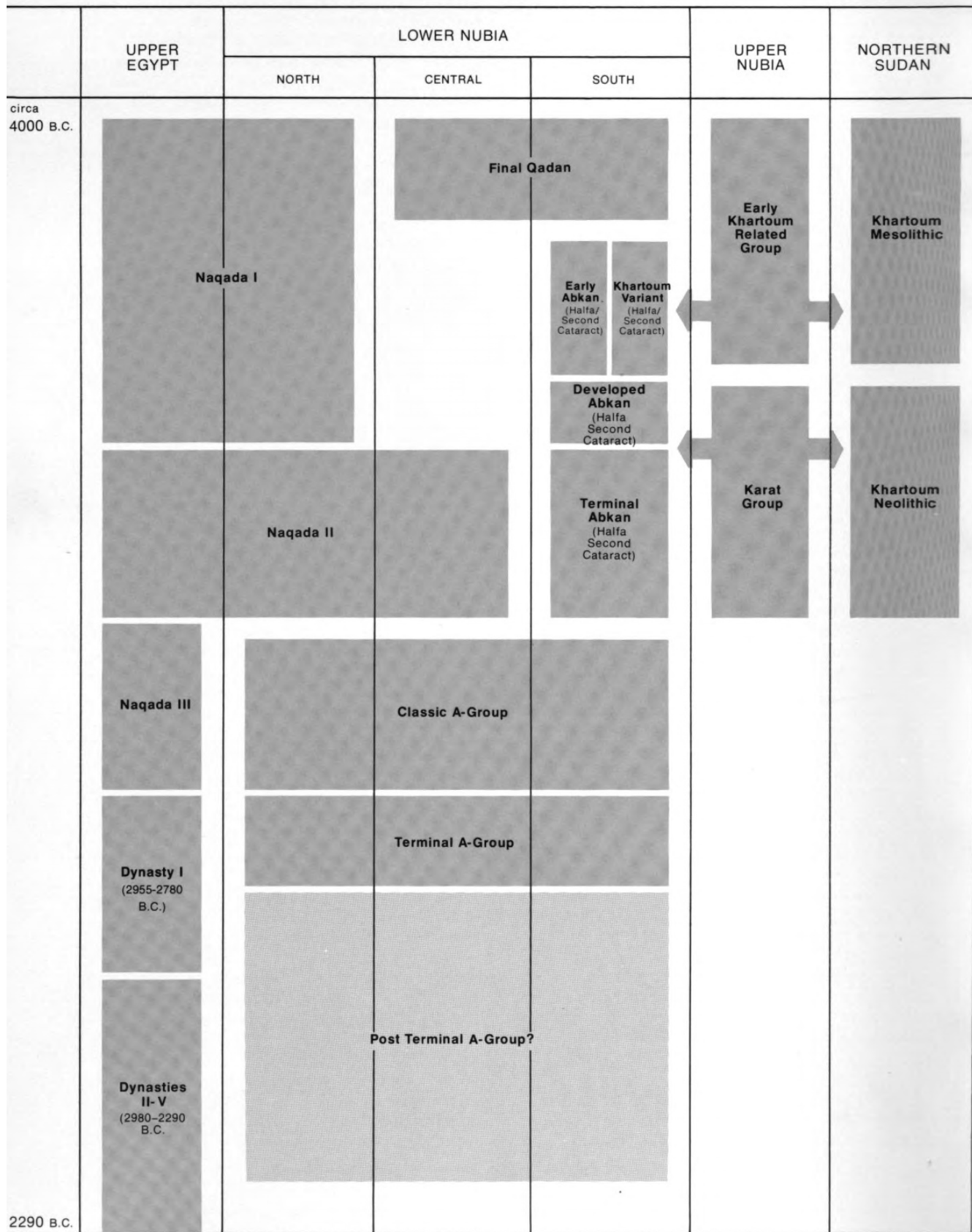


Fig. 25. Early cultures of Nubia and the northern Sudan.



HISTORIC PERIOD							
	EGYPT		LOWER NUBIA			UPPER NUBIA	
			EGYPTIAN TEXTUAL RECORDS		ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDS	EGYPTIAN TEXTUAL RECORDS	ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDS
2635 B.C.							
2570 B.C.		Dynasty III					
2450 B.C.		Dynasty IV			Post-Terminal A-Group?		
2290 B.C.	Old Kingdom	Dynasty V			Cultural break		
2155 B.C.		Dynasty VI	Wawat (North)	Irtjet (Central)	Zetjau (South)	Early C-Group (Phase I/a Phase I/b)	Yam (North?)
2040 B.C.	First Intermediate Period	Dynasties VII-X Dynasty XI					
1785 B.C.	Middle Kingdom	Dynasty XII			C-Group (Phase II/a Phase II/b)		Earlier Kerma culture
1554 B.C.	Second Intermediate Period	Dynasty XIII Dynasties XIV-XVII	Wawat		Increasing Egyptianization of C-Group  Intrusive Pan-grave and Later Kerma cultures	Kush	Later Kerma culture
	New Kingdom	Dynasty XVIII			Complete Acculturation of all Groups		

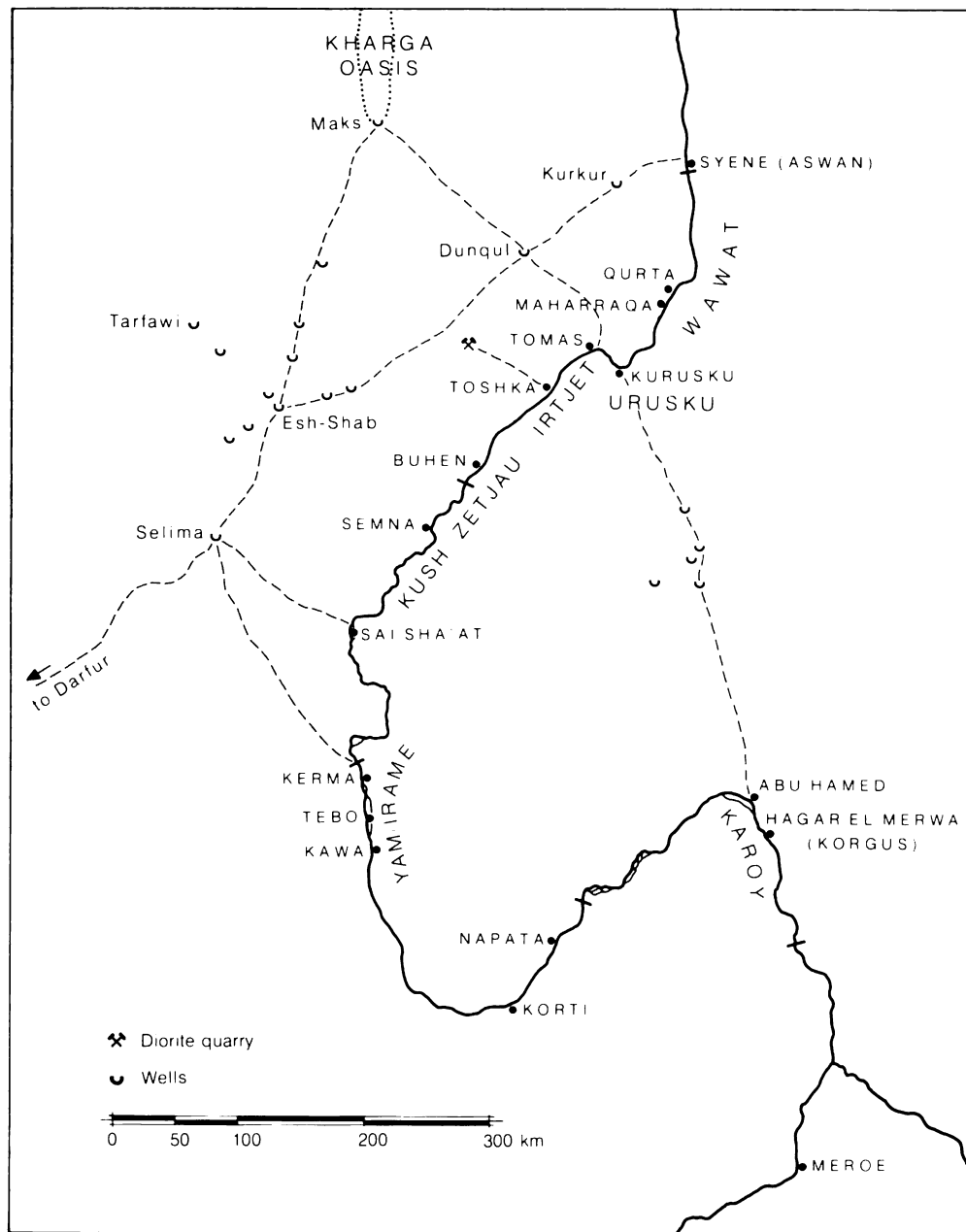


Fig. 26. Map of Nubia in the Old Kingdom.

The A-group is usually thought to have terminated early in the Egyptian Dynasty I (ca. 3000 B.C.), at which point imported Egyptian artifacts cease in A-group contexts. However, a similar cessation in the succeeding C-group marked the end of indigenous trading opportunities but not of cultural extinction, and it is possible that the A-group, undergoing

a comparable experience, survived into the Old Kingdom (Fig. 26). It is true that the "B-group," supposedly the impoverished descendant of the A-group, has been shown to be an archaeological fiction, but some at least of an unpublished collection of indisputable A-group sherds from the Old Kingdom town at Buhen were certainly deposited there while



the town was occupied, that is, during Dynasties IV and V. It is possible that the deposition was secondary and that the material came from an earlier disturbed cemetery or settlement, but no traces of such were found, and the dominant typological features of the sherds mark them off from both the "Classic" and "Terminal" A-group.

However, the A-group did decline in cultural strength, and there was a decrease or displacement of an already small population. The next Lower Nubian assemblage, the C-group, cannot date earlier than Egyptian Dynasty VI and appears to be intrusive, in that specific relationships with the A-group cannot be easily established. The origin of the C-group is uncertain; given the then prevailing environmental conditions, its bearers might have come from now desert regions on the east or west or from Upper Nubia. The Upper Nubian "Earlier" Kerma culture does not apparently reveal any *detailed* resemblances to the C-group, but its upper date remains uncertain.

The Kerma culture was the characteristic assemblage of northern (and perhaps southern) Upper Nubia from at least the Middle Kingdom to early Dynasty XVIII, that is, from 1991 to 1551 B.C. Its position on Fig. 25 is unconventional and requires comment. The "Later" Kerma culture is firmly dated to the latter part of the Second Intermediate Period (1785-1551 B.C.) by associated Egyptian artifacts. The "Earlier" Kerma culture is usually dated *after* this period. However, the Earlier Kerma culture's strong general affinities in grave types, burial customs, and to a degree in artifacts with the C-group, which had lost its distinctive Nubian character by about 1600 B.C., and its failure to reflect the inevitable repercussions of the Dynasty XVIII occupation of Upper Nubia both suggest that the reversed relative chronology used here is correct. The Earlier Kerma culture, known only from Kerma and Sai, has so far been published only in extremely summary form.

The Earlier Kerma culture includes several subphases, and its chronology in Egyptian terms is uncertain. Its relationship to the Later assemblage insures that it must correspond in part to the Middle Kingdom, and it *may* go back to Dynasty VI. Egyptian stone vases of that date were found at Kerma, but not, unfortunately, in direct association with either phase of the indigenous assemblage. However, since Upper Nubia was not under the strong Egyptian pressure which contributed to the cultural discontinuity between the A- and C-groups, the Upper Nubian continuity implied here is at least theoretically possible.

The Pan-grave culture (Fig. 25) is an intrusive assemblage in Egypt and Lower Nubia and is certainly a Second Intermediate Period sample of the material culture of the Medjay, the nomadic inhabitants of the eastern Nubian desert, where the rainfall of the Red Sea Hills has always supported a significant

population. Medjay history goes back to the Old Kingdom, but further exploration in the desert regions is required both to recover earlier Medjay material culture and to establish the significance of other assemblages, related to the riverine cultures but found as far afield as Agordat and the Wadi Howar. Until the onset of aridity was completed (ca. Dynasty VI), environmental conditions permitted significant human movement and contact in areas of now uninhabited desert. The A-group and the earlier C-group may therefore have had important links with extra-riverine areas, while the Yamites, inhabiting northern Upper Nubia in Dynasty VI, pursued into the desert the "Tjemeh-people," certainly a western desert group.

The Egyptians frequently referred to the riverine Nubians, the Medjay, and even the Puntites of the Red Sea coast as *Nehasyu*, "southerners"; but more specific references as well as iconographic data can be correlated in greater detail with the established chronology and distribution of the Nubian cultures. No certain reference to the A-group is known, since an early Dynasty IV raid on the "land of the *Nehasyu*," while not necessarily post-dating the A-group, may refer to an area beyond their habitat. The C-group, however, are certainly to be identified as the inhabitants of the Lower Nubian subregions of Wawat, Irtjet, and Zetjau referred to in Dynasty VI, and of Wawat in the sense of all Lower Nubia thereafter. Whether the Dynasty VI "Yamites" are to be equated with the beginning of the Earlier Kerma culture is uncertain, but certainly both phases of the Kerma culture may be described as "Kushite," since Upper Nubia was, in a general sense, called "Kush" from the beginning of Dynasty XII on.

The toponyms and personal names associated with the Nubian cultures described above (except the A-group) show that the Nubian language(s) differed from Egyptian, while depictions of Wawat people and Medjay during the First Intermediate Period and later, and of Kushites in the New Kingdom, show that the Nubians as a whole were distinguished from the Egyptians by their darker skins and other, "superficial" but visually striking, characteristics (Fig. 27). Skeletal remains are frequently less conclusively different from Egyptian ones, a result hardly surprising in an intermediate zone where the population was probably largely hybrid.

By the early New Kingdom, and without any major displacement of population, the culture of Wawat, that is, the C-group, had assimilated to Egyptian norms, virtually completely in material culture and to a considerable degree in intellectual. The small intrusive groups of Medjay and Kushites in Egypt and Lower Nubia were also completely acculturated, but the degree of acculturation reached in the *homelands* of each group remains unknown.



Fig. 27. Funerary stela of a Nubian named Nnw(?), from the Gebelein district, Upper Egypt, about 2100 B.C. (Boston 03.1848).

If we analyze the material cultures of these various Nubian groups with special attention to their specifically aesthetic aspects, we should keep in mind the spectrum of theoretically possible modes of development that the Nubians could have followed. At one end of the spectrum of art-producing societies we have those like the ancient Egyptian, wherein the development of major art forms was facilitated by a surplus economy, strong socio-economic divisions, a high degree of political centralization, and relatively advanced technical knowledge. At the other, we have groups like the Australian aborigines, existing at subsistence level, with extremely simple technologies and highly fragmentary political structures, yet producing accomplished and expressive art forms. Do any of the Nubian groups fit within this spectrum or are they amongst those societies whose aesthetic energies were confined to a comparatively

simple development of the applied arts, the relatively unelaborate and nonsymbolic decoration of pottery, basketry, and other artifacts?

Interaction between Egypt and Nubia was important in this as in other aspects of Nubian culture and raises the question as to why the A-group *did* become such a distinctly "non-Egyptian" entity and was not simply absorbed into the rapidly developing, expansive Egyptian cultural region. Whether one assumes that the prehistoric Lower Nubian population was always ethnically and linguistically different from the Egyptian or became increasingly so as the synthesis between the Naqada II and the Wadi Halfa/Second Cataract cultures took place, the process itself shows that positive interaction between Egyptians and Nubians was possible, whatever their ethno-linguistic differences. The critical factors precipitating the historical split were the rapid crystallization of historic



Egyptian culture in the late fourth millennium B.C. and related political and military events.

Crystallization must have sharpened the differences, perhaps particularly in the vital area of communication. It seems likely that there was an "intermediate" linguistic zone between Upper Egypt and Nubia that facilitated contact, but the development of a written form of Egyptian by about 3000 B.C. must have increasingly imposed a rigidity upon the Egyptian language, particularly significant in this context if the vocabulary and pronunciation then given permanence and symbolic dominance were based on Northern or Middle rather than Upper Egyptian dialects. Political history is relevant in that the unification of Early Dynastic Egypt clearly involved conflict between expanding, competitive subregions. The southernmost part of Egypt, wherein there is no trace of A-group material, was incorporated into the Egyptian state at a late date. Throughout Dynasty I (i.e., for over 210 years) the region of "Ta-sety" was a zone of conflict, and this toponym probably referred then only to southernmost Egypt and not, as later, to Lower Nubia also. The gradual assimilation of "Ta-sety" must have reinforced the significance of the First Cataract as a political and strategic as well as an ethno-linguistic divide.

Subsequently, the Nubian cultures were sufficiently limited in their chosen means of aesthetic expression throughout their long history as to suggest a mental bias in their world view which inhibited the development of major art forms. This bias cannot now be recovered. Nevertheless, early Nubian art was not entirely restricted to apparently decorative functions, and the Nubian reaction to contact with Egyptian art forms was both positive and complex. It is therefore useful to examine other factors that either inhibited or stimulated the development of Nubian art.

In both the A- and C-groups there was a relatively strong tradition of abstract, geometric designs which appear frequently on incised (Cats. 27-40), impressed, and (in the A-group only) painted wares (Cats. 6-10; Fig. 28), and in simpler form on occasional A-group stone artifacts and in C-group beadwork. The evident origin of many of these designs in basketwork and beadwork patterns, their restriction to objects of largely practical or decorative use, and the almost complete absence of naturalistic motifs all suggest strongly that this geometric tradition was purely decorative and had none of the symbolic significance that superficially abstract patterns have had in other cultures.

Both the A- and C-groups had very restricted types of plastic art. Rare, highly schematic human figurines (Cats. 1, 2, 12-18; Fig. 29) occur in both cultures, and animals (cattle, goats?, antelope?) are added to the repertoire in the C-group (Cats. 19-22). These figurines are very small in scale, made of mud and clay, and found arranged in only the simplest

of groupings; however, their very existence and the funerary contexts in which they are usually found indicate that they had a more than decorative significance. Another interesting "naturalistic" tradition is restricted to the C-group. On a very specific class of coarseware jars, found in both funerary and settlement contexts, are incised simple, somewhat schematized linear figures of humans, birds, cattle, and other animals. These are sometimes arranged in formal decorative patterns but also occur in rather haphazardly organized "scenes." Similar figures in the same style but on a larger scale are incised, "pecked," and occasionally even painted upon boulder or cliff faces or in rock shelters along the valley edges (Vol. II, Figs. 3, 5-7), and sometimes cattle are incised upon tall, carefully shaped sandstone "stelae" set up in the earliest C-group (phase I/a) cemeteries.

This variety of form and context suggests that the naturalistic tradition was not purely decorative and might have provided the basis for further developments in art. It is worth noting that in prehistoric Egypt a tradition of schematic but vigorous naturalistic art found primarily on pottery also occurred on rock faces and at least once, at Hierakonpolis, was translated into the medium of a large-scale mural on mud plaster.

The factors that tended to have somewhat negative effects upon the developing Lower Nubian cultures, and particularly on their art, were partly inherent in the local situation and partly due to Egyptian contact. Lower Nubian resources were too limited to produce any substantial surplus food supply. The possibly strong pastoral orientation of the A-group also discouraged sedentary life to a degree, but the greater size and density of the C-group population suggests that by then environmental change had made agriculture more important and had had a stabilizing effect upon settlement patterns. This may be related to the indigenous political developments discussed below.

The absence of technology and the lack of materials were other inhibitive factors. Obviously, metallurgy is not essential to the development of art forms, but it can — and in Egypt did — have a stimulative effect. The Lower Nubians, however, knew how to make only stone, bone, and wooden tools, and contact with Egypt was not of a type to facilitate the spread of either metallurgical knowledge or metal implements. The Nubian architectural tradition, unlike the Egyptian, did not favor the close interrelationship between developing art forms and their changing monumental settings. In Egypt, for example, funerary scenes and texts were originally fairly simple and restricted to memorial stelae. They gradually became more extensive and complex as funerary chapels developed and enlarged, offering expanses of smooth protected wall surfaces suitable for carving or painting. The most substantial structures in the A-





Fig. 28. Large pottery vessel with herringbone decoration (Cat. 9), A-group, early third millennium B.C. (Aswan 269).

Fig. 29. Small female head of fired clay (Cat. 17), C-group, 1900-1550 B.C. (Leipzig 4395).



and C-groups were simple, earth-cut pit graves, rarely in the former but frequently in the latter culture surmounted by a circular superstructure of undressed stone (Figs. 30, 31). These structures afforded no surfaces suitable for painted, carved, or sculptural embellishment. The settlement sites of both groups indicate an extensive use of rubble, adobe, and light materials such as wood and leather; no trace of any significant mural decoration has been recovered from these usually severely reduced structures.

Apart from mud, clay, and paint, the other raw materials available were bone, leather, ivory, wood, and stone. All of these, except leather, were used for art forms in prehistoric Egypt, at a time when technology and social organization were approximately comparable to those of later Nubia, but A- and C-group objects in these materials are utilitarian, with rare geometric decoration. The dominant Nubian sandstone was certainly workable, if less satisfactory than the finer grained limestone of Egypt, and it is interesting to note that the relief carving of historic Egypt was related to a prehistoric tradition of theriomorphic slate palettes and other slate artifacts. Such slate objects appear in Lower Nubia in Naqada I and II times, but the A-group was apparently cut off from the sources of slate and used for its simple oval palettes a hard, coarse-grained quartzite of local origin, extremely resistant to complex working.

Contact with Egypt was stimulative in that Lower Nubian control over trade items moving between Egypt and the Sudan generated additional income, enhancing socio-economic and political developments within Nubia, and also gave the Nubians some access to Egyptian technology, art forms, and concepts. But it was also inhibitive, in that Egypt periodically sought control over Lower Nubia in order to reduce the cost of trade and to exploit nearby mineral resources, which the Nubians were unable to do. Thus, in the A-group Egyptian imports were frequent, high-status graves emerged, and accomplished art forms of Egyptian origin (e.g., mace handles and palettes with naturalistic relief work) began to appear. At Afya, efforts were made to emulate contemporary Egyptian funerary architecture. But the raids of Early Dynastic Egyptians and the establishment of permanent Egyptian centers at Buhen, Kuban, and perhaps elsewhere ended the commercial advantages of the A-group and contributed to the disappearance of the indigenous culture.

Contemporary Egyptian weakness allowed the early C-group people (phases I/a and I/b) to participate in trade or to levy "dues" upon it, as evidenced by relatively frequent Egyptian imports, and gave them the freedom to develop a strong tendency toward political centralization, which at least once resulted in a single "chiefdom" for all Lower Nubia. This process probably continued until the reconquest of Lower Nubia began in Dynasty

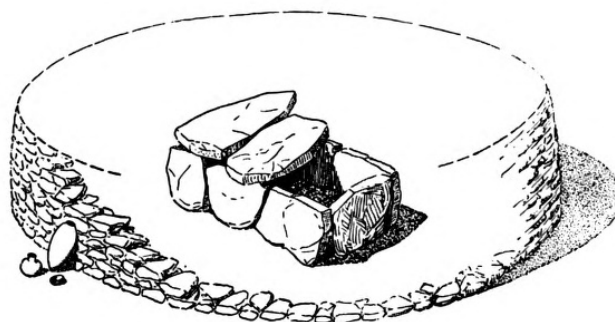


Fig. 30. Reconstruction of an Early C-group tomb, 2200-1900 B.C. (after Steindorff 1935).

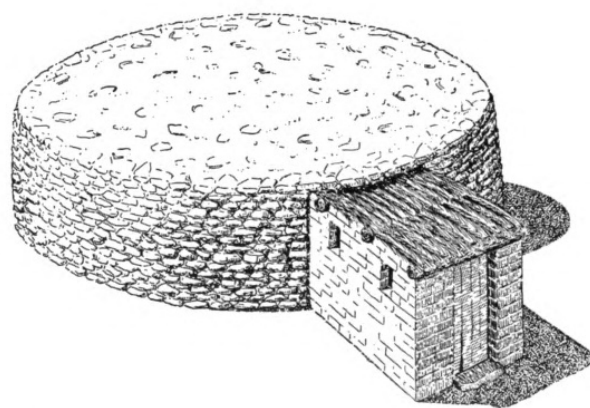


Fig. 31. Reconstruction of a Classic C-group tomb with funerary chapel, 1900-1550 B.C. (after Steindorff 1935).



XI, but it is not associated with any striking developments in the archaeological record. "Egyptianization" was almost nonexistent, partly because there were no mechanisms likely to bring it about. Nubians entered Egypt as enforced levies and voluntary immigrants and in both cases settled and were assimilated rather than returning home. Since the Old Kingdom centers of Lower Nubia had been abandoned, there was no Egyptian population for the indigenes to interact with. The typical imported objects stimulated no artistic initiatives, being mostly utilitarian (pottery, beads, metal weapons), except for small seal amulets, which the Nubians did not attempt to emulate.

The occupation of Lower Nubia in the Middle Kingdom, despite the establishment of a number of Egyptian centers, effectively *decreased* Nubian access to Egyptian technology and concepts and inhibited indigenous political development. The C-group people, excluded from trade and from living in the fortress towns, simply maintained their traditional material culture; interestingly, even the naturalistic figures on pottery began to be replaced by abstract designs drawn from the still vigorous geometric tradition. In Dynasty XIII, the Egyptian garrisons ceased to rotate and became permanent communities, increasingly unable to rely on support from a weakening Egypt and compelled therefore to a closer relationship with the surrounding C-group population. Egyptian artifacts again appear amongst the C-group, and the extremely large tombs of "chieftains" reflect the emergence of an indigenous elite. Paradoxically, however, the intensity and intimacy of the interaction led to the *disappearance* of the indigenous culture, which yielded rapidly to Egyptian customs and technology. By the end of the Second Intermediate Period, the C-group had lost most of its distinctive features, and in the early New Kingdom we find the decorated tombs of chiefs of Wawat indistinguishable from those of contemporary Egypt.

Upper Nubia — Kush — had a different history. Its human and natural resources were greater, and Egyptian contact was less disruptive and intense. During the Middle Kingdom, Kushites were permitted to enter Lower Nubia for trading purposes, but penetrated northward only a slight distance and for a limited period; conversely, the occasional Egyptian raids into Kush were not apparently succeeded by any permanent or quasi-permanent posts. The belief that a Middle Kingdom trading post existed at Kerma itself depends basically upon a single stela from that site, which, like much other Middle Kingdom material there, may in fact have been plundered from Wawat.

It is not possible to comment in detail upon the Earlier Kerma culture until it is fully published; but the later phase reveals extremely important developments. One of these, a striking growth of political centralization, is essentially an indigenous development although enhanced by the accident of Egypt's contemporary

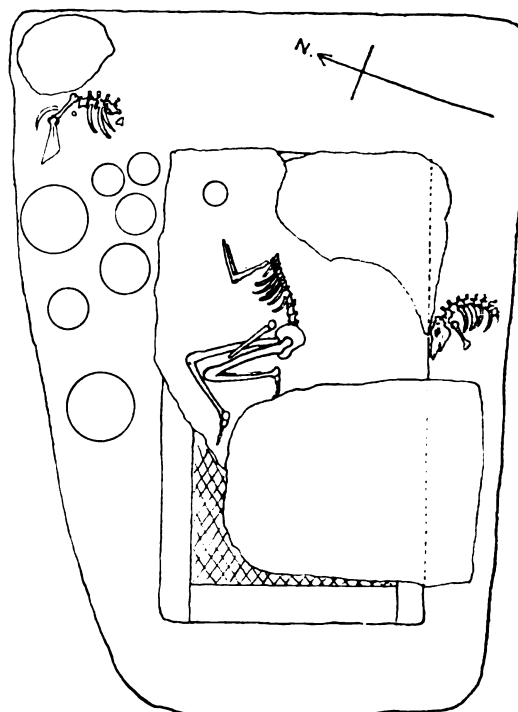


Fig. 32. Plan of Kerma burial no. 48, Cemetery M at Kerma.

weakness. By the late Second Intermediate Period (1785-1551 B.C.), a substantial part of Upper Nubia and eventually most of Lower Nubia were under the control of a single, hereditary Kushite dynasty, the status and power of its members being symbolized by their enormous burial tumuli at Kerma. The material culture of this Kushite "state" was distinctively Nubian and directly descended from the earlier phase. Burial customs included bed burials and human and animal sacrifice; graves were typically open pits surmounted by earthen tumuli (Fig. 32); and the dominant pottery was a black-topped red polished ware found in all the Nubian cultures but of exceptional fineness of fabric and form in the Kerma culture.





Fig. 33. Middle Minoan vessel with incised decoration, found at Kerma, 1975-1700 B.C. (Boston 13.5083).

Earlier Kerma culture art appears to have been exclusively abstract, decorative, and applied, except for occasional small mud figures of animals, and the same is true to a large extent of the later phase. However, as the political strength of the Kushite dynasty grew and contact with Egypt became increasingly intense, a most striking period of artistic experimentation ensued. Despite an evident use of Egyptian models and technology, these experiments had a distinct Kushite character, reflecting the fact that the Kushites were now politically *dominant* over large Egyptian communities in Lower Nubia and politically *equal* to contemporary Egypt.

The mechanisms creating this cultural interaction were complex. The conquest of Lower Nubia and raids on

Upper Egypt provided the Kushites with considerable booty, but in addition they entered into close diplomatic and commercial relations (Fig. 33) with the Hyksos overlords of Egypt that were not severed until the last rulers of the hitherto subordinate Theban Dynasty XVII began a war of liberation against both Asiatics and Kushites. Moreover, those Egyptians already living in Lower Nubia participated in Kushite rule and provided a variety of services and information, while others emigrated from Egypt to serve the Kushite dynasty.

One index to contact is the increasing numbers of Egyptian artifacts found at Kerma culture sites. Many were imports, but others were produced by Egyptian artisans serving the Kushites. Typically, they included





Fig. 34. View of Kerma with the Eastern Deffufa (K II), 1750-1550 B.C.

pottery (containers for imported produce), bronze swords and daggers, jewelry and amulets, and scarab and cowroid seals. At Kerma this repertoire was extended to include coffins, beds, and other items of furniture. Egyptian building technology in mud-brick and dressed stone is also well represented in the period of the "great tumuli," K III (Vol. II, Fig. 10), K IV, and K X at Kerma, which, according to the reversed chronology proposed here, represent the latest phase of the Later Kerma culture.

The influence of Kushite requirements upon Egyptian artisans is clear. Egyptian building technology was used to *enhance* indigenous forms of monumental architecture, not to replace them (Fig. 34). The frequently occurring bronze swords were based on an Egyptian model adapted to Kushite specifications, and rare bronze copies of Kushite pottery were made. In an interesting reversal, simplified copies of the popular scarabs and plaques were made by local artisans, being particularly common in the earlier "great tumulus,"

K XVI, but becoming rarer as Egyptian originals became more accessible.

In the applied arts, a repertoire of both geometric and naturalistic forms was developed for bone and ivory inlays (Cats. 45-51; Fig. 35) to decorate beds and for mica appliqué (Cats. 53-57) for caps. The stylistic models are Egyptian, and some obvious Egyptian motifs, such as a hippopotamus-like protective demon, are included, but the heavy emphasis upon indigenous animals and the use of mica reflect local tastes. Probably both Egyptian and Kushite artisans produced these items.

"Higher" art forms are entirely restricted to Kerma itself, reflecting the dominance of this site within the political-economic structure of Kushite society. In analyzing this fact, we must distinguish art objects plundered from elsewhere from art forms commissioned at Kerma itself. Thus, the many, mostly small, stone statues deposited in the "royal" and other high-status graves at Kerma are considerably earlier in date than the



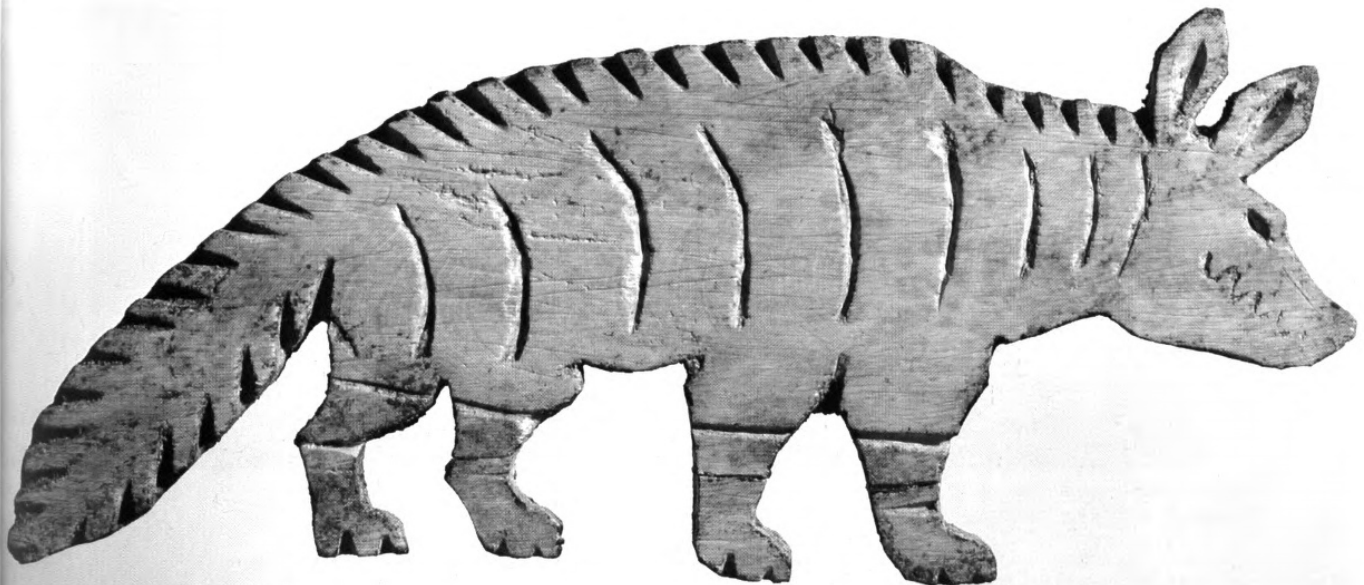
burials and were taken from the cemeteries and temples of Lower Nubia and perhaps Upper Egypt (Fig. 36). At Kerma, they were deposited like other funerary goods with the burials, not set up in accessible niches or chapels for the reception of offerings, as they would have been in an Egyptian context.

The absence of inscribed stelae amongst the plunder, and of inscriptions amongst the commissioned work, is striking and indicates that the Kushites were illiterate in either their own language or in Egyptian and did not appreciate the integral relationship between iconography and supporting text characteristic of Egyptian art. Although Egyptian subjects of the "ruler of Kush" set up inscriptions in his honor in Lower Nubia and the Kushites themselves employed Egyptian scribes to maintain written contact with Egypt, it is evident that verbal communication between Egyptians and Kushites was in general extremely limited. While this must have deprived the Kushites of a detailed understanding of the functions and symbolic meanings of Egyptian art, it left them freer to exploit its styles and techniques to express their own ideas.

This is particularly evident in the commissioned art work at Kerma, best attested in the two large, free-standing brick structures, K II and K XI (Fig. 34; Vol. II; Figs. 11, 12). Clearly designed and decorated by Egyptian artisans following Egyptian stylistic and technological models, both were embellished with dressed stone floors and column bases (K XI also had an outer stone casing and a stone ceiling) and a variety of faience tiles and inlays. In both structures, the mud-plastered interior walls were once covered with painted scenes in Egyptian style, and associated with K II were free-standing statuettes of blue-glazed quartzite, a locally obtained stone. Yet despite the heavy reliance on Egyptian styles and techniques, the structures are distinctly Kushite.

Their unusual form — a simple, two-chambered building with massive walls supporting a now destroyed upper story — cannot be paralleled in Egypt, and the naturalistic embellishments are quite un-Egyptian in content and emphasis. Although the entrance to K II had a granite lintel bearing a sun disk, it was flanked by two large walking lions in blue faience tile, and the associated quartz statuary consisted of lions, a ram, a scorpion, and

Fig. 35. Ivory inlay in the form of a hyena from the footboard of a bed (Cat. 48), Kerma culture, 1750-1550 B.C. (Boston 13.4221e).







*Fig. 36. Gray granite statue of the Lady Sennuwy, found at Kerma, about 1950 B.C. (Boston 14.720).*

a quadruped. Some of these came from a nearby, disturbed tumulus, K III, but their original context was probably K II. This un-Egyptian emphasis on animal forms was repeated in the painted decoration, which gave prominence to rows of giraffes, hippopotami, and cattle (Fig. 37). Considerable space was devoted to depicting a fleet of ships, which, whether representing indigenous or captured vessels or the arrival of quasi-diplomatic trade goods, constituted a symbolic expression of Kushite power and wealth.

The subsequent history of the Kerma culture cannot yet be traced, although one may reasonably surmise that this fascinating period of experimentation was cut short by the half-century of hostilities initiated by Kamose that continued into Dynasty XVIII, which resulted in the reconquest of Lower Nubia and, despite sustained Kushite resistance, the gradual occupation of Upper Nubia. The degree to which the Kushites eventually acculturated as a result will not be known until further archaeological exploration is carried out.

*Fig. 37. Wall painting on the west wall of the entrance of K XI at Kerma showing rows of hippopotami, 1750-1550 B.C.*



5

**Egypt in Nubia  
during the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms**

Jean Leclant

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At the very dawn of Pharaonic history, a little before 3100 B.C., the rulers of Egypt turned their eyes toward the territories to the south. This was the region beyond the confines of Gebel Silsileh and the first nome of Upper Egypt, which significantly enough was called Ta-sety, meaning Nubia. It was the territory beyond Aswan and Elephantine, the island where the barter for coveted ivory had long taken place. It was beyond the barrier of the First Cataract of the Nile. Into this inhospitable region the earliest pharaohs carried their trade and influence to the northernmost part of Nubia, which was then inhabited by a tribal society known today as the A-group.

In burials between the First and Second Cataracts, excavated in modern times, have been found vessels and copper weapons imported from Egypt, which indicate the existence of commercial relations between Egypt and her southern neighbors. It seems, however, that these relations were not always peaceful, for a plaque of Hor-Aha, who ruled Egypt at the very beginning of Dynasty I, records a victory over Ta-sety, and under his successor, Djer, a hard-to-read rock drawing at Gebel Sheikh Suliman, opposite Wadi Halfa, seems to indicate that Egyptian raiding parties may have advanced as far as the Second Cataract (Fig. 38). Should we perhaps attribute to these raids the weakening and final extinction of the A-group culture?

We must wait until the Old Kingdom (ca. 2650-2150 B.C.) to find Egyptian expeditions into Nubia on a large scale. Among the great deeds of Snofru, the founder of Dynasty IV, which were recorded on the Palermo Stone, was a campaign in Nubia, during which the king took seven thousand prisoners and brought back to Egypt a considerable booty in cattle. At Buhen, near Wadi Halfa, excavation has uncovered the remains of an installation that can be dated to the Old Kingdom on the basis of pottery fragments and of seal impressions bearing the names of early Egyptian rulers. That this site was important to the early pharaohs is indicated by the presence of a copper foundry.

Cheops and his successors also penetrated to the diorite quarries of the Nubian desert west of Toshka, which supplied the hard, fine-grained stone for the pharaohs' eternal likenesses. Certain graffiti at Tomas and three new inscriptions at Kulb, just south of the Second Cataract, are perhaps attributable to quarrying expeditions in the service of Old Kingdom rulers; the graffiti at Kulb are the southernmost records yet found of Egyptian presence in Nubia during the Old Kingdom.

In Dynasty VI, the Egyptian hold on Lower Nubia tightened. In the army that Pepy I sent to Asia under the leadership of General Weny were contingents from several Nubian principalities, and during the following reign of Merenra, Weny led an Egyptian expedition southward to obtain from the Nubian quarries fine stone for the sarcophagus and the pyramidion destined for the tomb of his Egyptian ruler. At that time, Weny supervised the construction of navigable channels through the First

Cataract, and the pharaoh himself made a journey to Elephantine to receive the homage of Nubian chieftains.

Nevertheless, the inscriptions at Tomas and those in the tombs of the nobles at Elephantine indicate that all was not easy in Nubia. It was necessary to "open the road" across the country and sometimes, as Pepynakht reports in his tomb, to engage in combat with the Nubians. The inscriptions of Herkhuf record long expeditions lasting several months, which penetrated as far as Yam, perhaps the region in the plain of Dongola later known as Irm. In order to avoid hostile principalities located in the Nile Valley, Herkhuf traveled along the sandy trails bordering the Libyan Desert. He lists the goods acquired by his caravan — three hundred donkey-loads of incense, ebony, oils, leopard skins, and ivory — all surely acquired from inner Africa by barter and passed from hand to hand to a point of contact with the outer world.

After the death of Merenra, Herkhuf made a fourth and last expedition to the south, whence he brought back the dwarf, probably a pygmy, who has become famous in Egyptian annals. This dwarf was offered as a gift to Pepy II, then still a child, and Herkhuf proudly had the little king's letter of thanks for the gift reproduced on the walls of his tomb at Elephantine. In it, the youthful sovereign commanded his servant to take care of his future playmate and to make sure that the small African arrived in good health at the royal court far down the river.

After the very long reign of Pepy II, which was marked by recurrent trouble in the south, the Old Kingdom collapsed. During the First Intermediate Period, when Egypt experienced a grave social crisis and political fragmentation, there developed in Lower Nubia the pastoral culture of the people who are now designated as the C-group. Of that dim period little is known. A celebrated model found at Asyut which represents a troop of soldiers from the south indicates that Nubian mercenaries played a part in the struggle for supremacy between the nomes of Upper Egypt (Fig. 10). These struggles finally ended with the Theban nomarchs of Dynasty XI, the Antefs and the Mentuhoteps (2134-1991 B.C.), reestablishing a firm rule in Upper Egypt. According to the graffiti of a soldier found at Abisko, south of the First Cataract, these new rulers even undertook an expedition into Nubia. Although a triumphal inscription at Gebelein can have been only a traditional statement of general significance, a number of other documents testify to the effective activity of the Egyptians in Nubia. Fear of the peoples from the south always remained alive in Egypt. In the execration texts and on magical figurines, the names of Nubian princes and tribes appear, together with those of Asiatic enemies and sometimes even of "subversive" Egyptians; the equipment of one of the numerous magicians occupied with conjuring against possible enemies of Egypt has recently been found at Mirgissa in the immediate vicinity of Wadi Halfa.

Activity directed toward the south was intensified under the pharaohs of Dynasty XII, whose policies in regard to Nubia began to be colored by imperialistic ambitions far beyond the occasional incursions known to the Egypt of the Old Kingdom. Undoubtedly it was necessary to protect the caravans of merchants and of expeditions to the quarries, but also, and above all, it was essential to secure the way to the gold mines, especially those of Wadi el Allaqi, which were increasingly important to the Egyptian economy. It was also more than ever necessary to tighten the security of Egypt's southern border, because beyond Wawat (Lower Nubia) and the regions controlled by the C-group the shepherds of a new power had appeared. South of the Third Cataract in the rich plains of Dongola, the region known to the Egyptians as the Land of Kush, the Kerma culture was developing. This constituted a far from negligible danger for Egypt, although to us its importance has been made evident only through recent research.

A prophecy after the fact, called the Prophecy of Neferty, foretells the coming of a king from the south: "... he is called Amen, son of a woman from Ta-sety." This king is undoubtedly Amenemhat I (1991-1971 B.C.), and his mother's place of origin was presumably the first nome of Upper Egypt, which was certainly richly populated by Nubians. According to an inscription cut near Kurusku, this king sent an Egyptian army southward in Year 29 of his reign to regain control of the land of Wawat. His son Sesostri I established himself firmly at the Second Cataract. A fine sandstone stela found at Buhen depicts the Theban god Montu presenting to the latter pharaoh the conquered territories of Nubia, with Kush at their head. This is the earliest known mention of the Land of Kush, a name destined to become famous, down to Biblical times, as a designation of the territory bordering the Nile south of Egypt.

A long chain of strong fortresses to be completed only in the reign of Sesostri III (1878-1842 B.C.) was now projected along the Nile (Fig. 39). A papyrus found at the Ramesseum lists their threatening names: "Repelling the Tribes" and "Taming the Deserts." These fortresses recently came into new prominence, and some of them were carefully reexamined, before their enormous bastions of sun-dried brick surrounded by galleries pierced with loopholes were submerged and dissolved in the waters of Lake Nasser. That well-armed troops were once garrisoned in these strongholds was revealed by an armory found at the fort of Mirgissa (Fig. 40), which contained arrowheads, javelins, lances, and stone knives, meticulously arranged.

All along the Nile in Lower Nubia, the fortresses insured freedom of communication, particularly guarding the roads that led to the gold mines. But the most important of them were the mammoth structures of Buhen (Fig. 41) and Mirgissa, guarding the frontier of the Middle Kingdom at the Second Cataract, in the midst of the worst stretch of the rocky valley which is difficult to traverse even today. In these solitudes, now called Batn el Hagar, "Belly of Rocks," the Egyptians reared their most impregnable fortresses, each in sight of the other and some of them situated on islands, with the Nile surrounding them like a moat. The heart of the Second Cataract itself was secured by the citadel of Semna on the West Bank and of Kumma on the East.

The complete "pacification" of Nubia was the work of Sesostri III (Fig. 42), who was destined to be honored as the protective deity of Nubia in temples erected there during the New Kingdom. As is shown by an inscription dated to the tenth year of his reign, recently found on a rock in the rapids of Dal, the armies of this king actually penetrated beyond the Second Cataract. He attempted a canal in the massif of rocks



Fig. 38. Rock drawing of King Djer from Gebel Sheikh Suliman, about 2700 B.C. (Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).



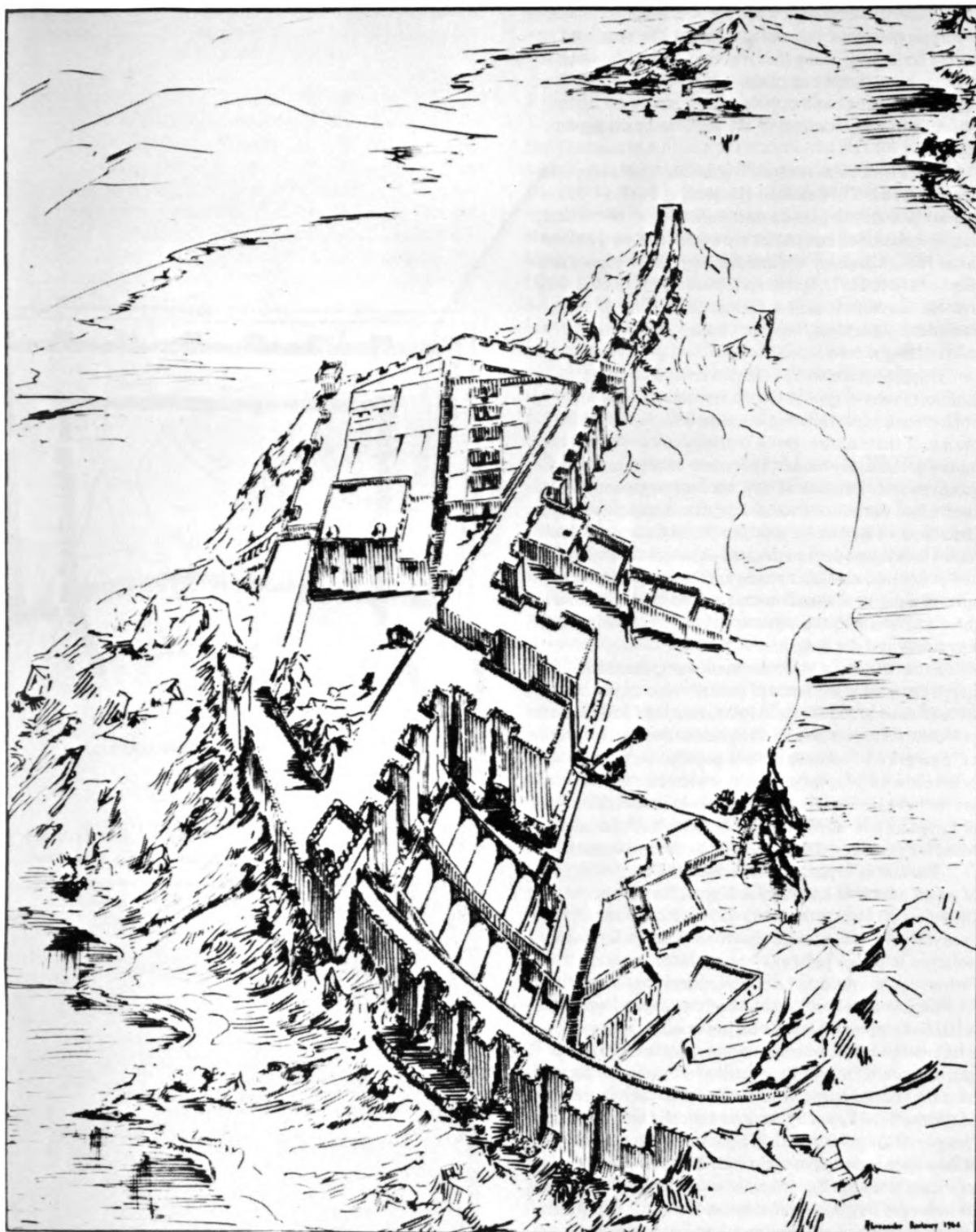


Fig. 39. Reconstruction of the Middle Kingdom (2040-1785 B.C.) island fortress at Askut (after Badawy 1964).

at the First Cataract and, since the Nile is not navigable at certain places during some seasons of the year, he had trails built along the river to insure the passage of boats at all times; one of these, discovered at Mirgissa, consists of a long band of Nile mud, which was evidently moistened to allow the boats to be dragged along it.

River traffic was severely regulated. A stela erected at Semna in Year 8 of Sesostri III (Berlin/DDR 14753) forbids Nubians to pass downstream by boat or on land; only merchants or emissaries are authorized to travel as far as Iken (Mirgissa). On another large and haughty stela (Berlin/DDR 1157), Sesostri III vaunts his final victory over his southern foes in contemptuous terms. His immediate successors, however, hardly dared make military forays into Nubia.

It seems that a sort of passive resistance became manifest in the C-group. Only a few small Egyptian objects such as scarabs and amulets were found in the burials of that culture. But it is also necessary to bear in mind the relatively modest economic condition of the C-group people. The lack of imported wares presents a contrast to the abundance of Egyptian artifacts in the cemeteries of Kerma, beyond the Third Cataract, which have yielded, in addition to small objects, statues (Fig. 36) and statuettes, alabaster vases, and copper daggers. In spite of a political situation that was undoubtedly tense, these artifacts attest to commercial relations between the Egyptians and the Kingdom of Kush.

From the Middle Kingdom onward, the rulers of Egypt resorted to the lands of the south for mercenaries to serve in their armies. The Medjay, recruited in the deserts of Nubia, were particularly in demand. Burials designated as "pan-graves" because of their peculiar form are believed to have belonged to these mercenaries. Such graves have been uncovered not only in the neighborhood of Egyptian garrisons in Nubia but also in Upper and Middle Egypt, perhaps even as far north as Saqqara.

The end of Dynasty XII marked the beginning of a new period of anarchy for Egypt, the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1785-1551 B.C.). Recent excavations have revealed that for a time the Egyptian presence in Nubia persisted; the Middle Kingdom fortresses continued to be occupied and kept in repair. At Mirgissa a stela of Wegaf, the first king of Dynasty XIII, and also numbers of seal impressions from administrative documents or from supplies sent to the garrison, indicate that Egypt still exercised some control over the southern trade routes. But with the seizure of the north of Egypt by the invading Hyksos, those "shepherd kings" from Asia, Egyptian presence in Nubia once more came to an end. Kerma, undoubtedly profiting from the Egyptian debacle, extended its influence beyond Semna; stelae from Buhen indicate that some Egyptians remained there in the service of Kush. Nevertheless, in a curious sort of reaction, after the decline of the political domination, the

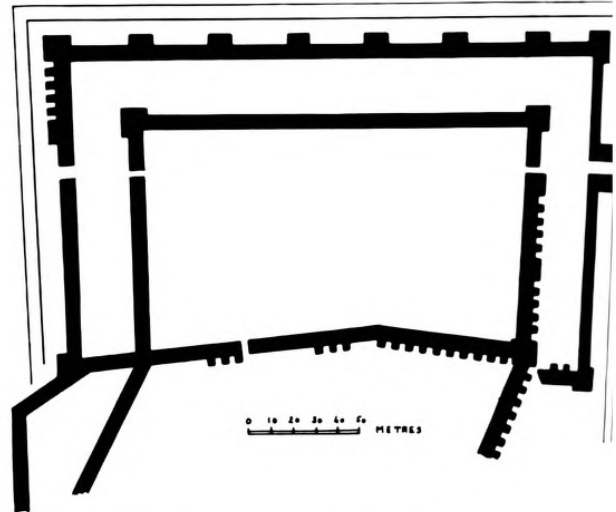


Fig. 40. Plan of the Middle Kingdom (2040-1785 B.C.) fortress at Mirgissa (after Vercoutter 1970).

Fig. 41. The Middle Kingdom (2040-1785 B.C.) fortress at Buhen.





C-group people adopted certain Egyptian customs and finally, after long resistance, experienced an ethnic acculturation.

Meanwhile, in the Theban region, there were signs of Egyptian reawakening. Sekenenra-Taa and after him Kamose began a struggle for liberation. In order to take the Thebans in a pincer movement, the Hyksos King Aa-userre-apophis sought an alliance with the Kushites. The Carnarvon Tablet (Gardiner 1916b), with its text resembling a minstrel's romance, has recently acquired a sequel of purely historical content inscribed on a large stela that emerged from the earth at Karnak in 1954 (Habachi 1972). On it we read that the followers of Kamose intercepted an emissary of the Hyksos king en route to the Oases, with the result that the urgent message he bore never reached its destination. Kamose, with the aid of the Medjay, successfully routed the enemy, paving the way for his successor, Ahmose, who finally took possession of the Hyksos capital at Avaris and drove the invaders back into Asia.

It was Ahmose who founded Dynasty XVIII and gloriously inaugurated the New Kingdom (1551-1080 B.C.). Hardly had the Egyptians driven out the Hyksos when they undertook the reconquest of the south. We are well informed about the campaigns of Ahmose and his successors in Nubia, thanks to one Ahmes, son of Ibana, whose biography is inscribed on the walls of his tomb at Elkab. Ahmes was, so-to-speak, a "marine," who recorded faithfully the successive stages of his long military career. From the autobiography he left and from other sources, we learn how Lower Nubia came once more under Egyptian control. Cartouches of Kamose and Ahmose are prominent in rock inscriptions at Arminna. Ahmose built a temple at Buhen, north of the great Middle Kingdom fortress; his son Amenhotep I left his name at Semna. Discoveries on the Island of Sai — a statue of Ahmose, a block with the name of his wife Nefertary, and a statue of Amenhotep I — suggest that the first kings of Dynasty XVIII occupied that island beyond the Second Cataract. However that may be, Amenhotep I decided upon the colonization of all Nubia under a viceroy to be known as "King's Son of Kush" and "Overseer of the Southern Lands." The first holder of this office was, it seems, a certain Turi, who had formerly been commandant of the fortress of Buhen.

Progress was accelerated under Tuthmosis I. At Tangur, an inscription among the rocks of the Batn el Hagar shows a scribe "counting the boats" that went upstream (a shipwreck was always possible), and a comparable document has recently been discovered at Akasha West. In his drive to the south, Tuthmosis I succeeded in passing the Third Cataract, thus opening the gateway to the plains of Dongola, and suddenly the resistance of Kerma collapsed. Well beyond this point, a stela was erected at Kurgus, about fifty kilometers south of Abu Hamed, and thus, for the first time in Egyptian history, there was opened a direct route toward the



Fig. 42. King Sesostris III (1878-1842 B.C.) smiting an enemy, from Gebel Agg, Toshka East (after Simpson 1963).

borders of Black Africa. Doubtless, however, the Egyptians had not yet "pacified" the entire valley of the Nile over all that distance. It could not have been more than a raiding party that had crossed the desert on the ancient track that leads from Kurusku in Lower Nubia and, avoiding the great bend of the river in the region of Dongola, had proceeded by land to Tumbus at the southern end of the Third Cataract. Be that as it may, there was erected at Tumbus a fortress defiantly named "Nobody-Dares-to-Look-at-Him-among-the-United-Nine-Bows." The "Nine Bows" were the traditional enemies of Egypt.

Farther north, the New Kingdom pharaohs ordered the restoration and enlargement of the fortresses at Kuban, Ikkur, Aniba, and Buhen, which had been built by their Middle Kingdom predecessors. It is worth noting that several of these fortresses guarded the approaches to gold mines and that, in contrast, the garrisons of the Batn el Hagar were little used or abandoned. For now that the Egyptians had advanced beyond the Third Cataract, the defense system of what had once been the frontier of the Middle Kingdom had become obsolete and the new rulers of Egypt had henceforth to concentrate their military effort on borders that had shifted much farther to the south.

There, the newly conquered peoples did not accept Egyptian domination without revolt. In the first year of his reign, Tuthmosis I confronted a rebellion; an inscription at Aswan tells how the insurgents were massacred to a man, with the exception of the son of a local chieftain, who was brought as a prisoner to the pharaoh. It can be assumed that this princely hostage, brought up in Egypt, was steeped in Egyptian culture and ultimately sent back to his homeland to become a supporter of Egyptian rule; such was the practice frequently employed by the pharaohs of the New Kingdom to insure the fidelity of Kushite leaders.

Another campaign in Nubia was undertaken under Queen Hatshepsut, but it was the great conqueror Tuthmosis III (1490-1436 B.C.) who carried Egyptian rule to its southernmost limits. In the forty-seventh year of his reign, he had a victory stela erected at Napata, the famous site marking the boundary of the empire at the foot of the "Holy Mountain," Gebel Barkal. And in the great temple of Amun-Re at Thebes he could declare himself satisfied with his conquests, not only in Asia but in Africa as well. There he boasts that he had advanced the Egyptian frontier to "the ends of the earth," but indeed, beyond Napata, no sure trace of the New Kingdom has been detected. With its fortress and temples, Napata was more than a frontier post at the south of the empire; it was the place where products brought by caravans from Africa were assembled for transport to Egypt; it was a sort of gigantic customhouse at the entrance to the Egyptian empire.

During the following reign, that of Amenhotep II, according to a stela found at Amada, the king had a

captive Syrian prince hung by the heels on the walls of Napata. This gesture of intimidation seems to indicate that all was not quiet on the southern front; indeed, a Nubian revolt again occurred under Tuthmosis IV, and Amenhotep III (1403-1365 B.C.) was likewise obliged to send a "punitive" expedition southward. However, the lists of enemies killed or captured reveal the small scale of these enterprises, and one is tempted to regard the Egyptian expeditions as little more than displays of force to remind the Nubians of Egyptian supremacy (Fig. 43). It was in a well-pacified region that Amenhotep III erected temples at Soleb and Sedeinga. As indicated on his "Marriage Scarab," his empire was deemed to reach from Mesopotamia (Naharina) in the north to Karoy (doubtless near Napata) in the south.

During Dynasty XIX the situation remained calm. To be sure, a fragment of a stela recently found at Sai mentions a campaign of Sety I in upper Nubia, but that may have been an enterprise of limited importance. By one of those paradoxes frequent in historical documentation, it is on rock in the desolate zone of the Third Cataract at Nauri that a great stela informs us of measures taken by Sety I in favor of the temple at Abydos. On the road to the gold mines of Wadi el Allaqi, Sety I made an attempt to sink a well, but without success, as a famous stela from Kuban records; his successor, Ramesses II, however, had the luck to tap a source of water.

Representations dating to the period of Ramesses II, which often appear to refer to campaigns in Nubia, may be regarded simply as official propaganda used to counterbalance that sovereign's victories in Asia. Actually, Egyptian control of the colonized territories to the south seems to have been relatively firm, and

Fig. 43. Detail of a bronze dagger from Semna with scene showing an Egyptian king represented as a lion attacking an African prisoner, 1500-1400 B.C. (Khartoum 2468).



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thus the pharaohs of the New Kingdom were left free to concern themselves with their Asiatic ventures and with political developments in the conquered territories of the Near East.

Monuments of the New Kingdom frequently picture the pharaoh smiting his fettered enemies, whom he presents to the divine triad of Thebes. This age-old scene, increasingly frequent in the New Kingdom, includes representations of adversaries from all the regions of the world known to Egypt; among them, the Negro, symbol of the south, is easily recognizable, and the names of African tribes sometimes appear in strange spellings on lists recording the conquests of New Kingdom rulers. Although the Negro was pictured among Egypt's traditional enemies from earliest times, in the New Kingdom such representations of royal conquest become more abundant. The heads of black captives occur on the bases of statues, on the planks of royal ships, on the body of the pharaoh's chariot. Tutankhamen's walking sticks permitted the heads of Negroes to trail in the dust. These are traditional themes of magical import rather than records of events. The cosmic functioning of the kingship required a constant magical reaffirmation of the triumph of the pharaoh over his spellbound enemies (Fig. 44).

According to Egyptian documents, the organization of the empire was a triumph of colonial administration. The government of Nubia was entrusted (as previously stated) to a viceroy, the "King's Son of Kush," so called because his power was truly royal. He is "Lord of the Nubian Tribute" and "... he who fills the treasury with electrum." Chosen from among the court favorites, from among the scribes rather than the military, he was assisted by the "Chief of the Archers of Kush" and two lieutenant generals, one for the province of

Wawat, the other for the south, that is, Kush proper.

One of the major administrative tasks was the control of the gold mines. Among the numerous sites yielding the precious metal, the most celebrated was that in Wadi el Allaqi. There working conditions were terrible: "If I lie," reads an ancient complaint, "they may cut off my nose and my ears — or they may send me to Kush." However, the chief activity of Nubia was the exchange of commercial products. On their temples and tombs, important dignitaries of the New Kingdom smugly repeat scenes showing the arrival of what they, in their role of masters of the universe, called the "tribute of Kush." Nubia "gave" to Egypt gold and ivory, fine woods and perfumes, panther skins and the plumes and eggs of ostriches; some of these last, as is shown in a tomb at Dendera, perhaps were reexported to far-off Mycenae. From Nubia came also such exotic animals as apes and giraffes and, more prosaically, herds of cattle. This "tribute" included not only the products of Nubia itself but also goods that came from far-off and almost mythical regions of inner Africa.

One of the most picturesque representations of the "tribute" of Kush is the impressive cortege that the Viceroy Huy, who served under Tutankhamen, had painted in vivid colors on a wall of his Theban tomb (Fig. 14). There are pictured Negro bearers carrying trays laden with gold rings on their heads; a man with a giraffe on a leash brings up the rear. Some of the men of the south are depicted as being chocolate brown; others are of a coppery hue. Following them, in a chariot drawn by oxen, is a princess sheltered by a parasol — the African symbol par excellence of high rank. Sensitive to current opinion, the iconography has been adjusted to represent Kushites as black Africans in the dress

Fig. 44. Scene from a painted wooden box of King Tutankhamen (1347-1337 B.C.), showing the king slaughtering brown- and black-skinned southerners (Cairo T. 324) (after Davies 1962).



and ornaments characteristic of inner Africa, although Kush must have been inhabited at that time by peoples of mixed type rather than by true blacks (Fig. 45).

Behind this colonial display, it is difficult to discover the true facts of Nubian life. Excavations indicate, however, that the culture of the C-group gradually disappeared in Lower Nubia after the reconquest of the region. Local funerary customs were abandoned, and at all levels of society Egyptianization was swift. In Egypt the "Pages of the Harim" had been established to serve as a sort of training school for the children of notables from conquered lands, and it is very likely that sons of Nubian chiefs were sent downstream to be instructed in the ways of their overlords. In any event, local chieftains now frequently bear Egyptian names and are buried according to Egyptian custom. At Debeira East, the tomb of Djehutyhotep, Prince of Teh-khet, is decorated with fine paintings (Fig. 12); his brother Amenemhat was laid to rest on the opposite side of the river under a pyramid with a well-carved stela in gray granite. Farther north, at Toshka, Hekanefer, a Prince of Miam and a former Page of the Harim, reposed in a tomb embellished with fine hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Nubia's humbler population served as a great source of manpower that furnished not only the local government but also Egypt itself with slaves and workmen, soldiers and police. Especially in these last categories, Nubians rose to positions of power. In Nubia proper, the number of Egyptian "colonials" must have been small, consisting chiefly of military and civil officials, soldiers, merchants, and priests. They were housed in small compounds, whose ruins occur at regular intervals of thirty kilometers along the Nile Valley. As a rule, these settlements in the plain are fortified only in name (*menenou*), for fortresses are no longer the typical Egyptian monuments in Nubia; they have given place to temples, bastions of magical power attesting to the superiority of Egyptian deities and Egyptian divinely descended rulers.

Tuthmosis II seems to have built a temple at Dakka and another on the Island of Argo at Tebo, where his name (or is it that of Tuthmosis I?) is visible on reused blocks. A sanctuary of Hathor was erected at Faras by Queen Hatshepsut, to whom we also owe a temple at Buhen, later rebuilt by Tuthmosis III. During the reign of the latter king, Nubia was covered with temples. In the sanctuary he rebuilt at Semna, his predecessor Sesostri III is exalted as conqueror and protector.

During the reign of Tuthmosis III were hewn the earliest of the rock temples that were to become a typical feature of Nubia; on a promontory dominating the Nile, halfway between Soleb and Sedeinga, was built the rock chapel of Gebel Dosha, near which are inscriptions and representations honoring Hathor of Ibshek. Farther north, the rock temple of Ellisiya shows Tuthmosis III in adoration before Horus, the Nubian god Dedwen, and the deified Sesostri III.



Fig. 45. Detail of a bronze openwork stand from Aniba, showing Nubians leading horses, 1400-1300 B.C. (Leipzig 4804).

The list of Nubian constructions of Tuthmosis III and his voceroy, Nehy, is long. It includes not only the temple of Kalabsha, but also a temple dedicated to the Horus of Baki at Dakka, two small rock sanctuaries at Qasr Ibrim, and others at Sai and Tebo. The temple at Amada begun by Tuthmosis III in honor of Horus of Miam was completed by his son Amenhotep II. Numerous blocks inscribed with the name of this latter king have been found at Sai, and he also constructed a little rock sanctuary at Qasr Ibrim.

Investigations of the past few years have made available for study the temple built by Amenhotep III at Wadi es-Sebua. An installation of the same king has recently been discovered at Sai, and blocks bearing his name have been brought to light at Tebo. Above all, however, we are indebted to Amenhotep III for one of the finest of Nubian temples, that of Soleb, which ranks among the masterpieces of New Kingdom architecture (Fig. 46). It was just below the Third Cataract that Amenhotep III erected this great jubilee temple, where the dynastic god Amun-Re and the deified king were worshipped. The "living image" of the king (surnamed



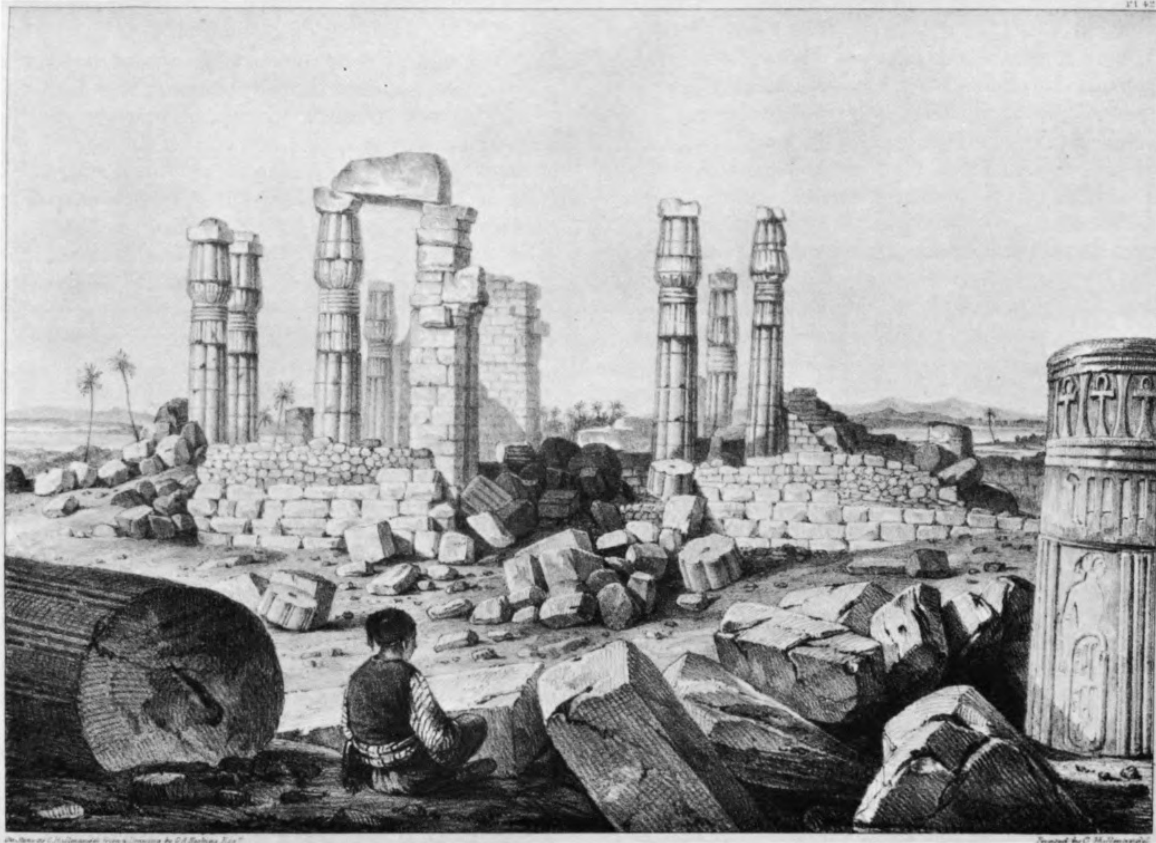


Fig. 46. Temple built by Amenhotep III (1403-1365 B.C.) at Soleb (after Cailliaud 1826).

Nebmaatre, “Re-Is-the-Lord-of-Truth”) wears a cylindrical crown surmounted by disk and crescent, the last perhaps alluding to the child god Khonsu and symbolizing rebirth. The royal face is framed by a pair of ram’s horns, attributes of the solar deity Amun.

Before the great temple rises a massive pylon that leads into two courts, as in funerary temples. Around the first court are scenes of the *sed*-festival, carved in small scale in eight registers; they include the illumination of the dais, the consecration of the gates, and, above all, the endless defile of jubilee processions, interrupted at intervals by offering scenes to divers divinities. Beyond the second court remain the ruins of the hypostyle hall. At the bases of the columns are shields picturing and naming the subjugated peoples of Asia and Africa; over one hundred of these valuable historical records have been revealed by recent excavations in this astonishing ethnographic gallery. Among them, only one must be noted here — that naming the Shasu of Yahweh, a tribe of bedouin from Sinai. This tribal name embodies the earliest occurrence that has come to light of the tetragram signifying God, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Thus, in the heart of conquered Nubia, pharaoh reaffirms both his divine nature and his earthly power. About fifteen kilometers farther north, at Sedeinga (Fig. 47), a second temple was consecrated to Amenhotep’s Great Royal Wife, Queen Tiye; and thus was established the custom of two royal sanctuaries, one masculine, one feminine, which was followed a century later by Ramesses II at Abu Simbel.

The son of Amenhotep III, the so-called “heretic king” Akhenaten, also left traces in Nubia. He built at Sesebi, in the region of the Third Cataract; and a little southward, at Kawa opposite Dongola, he left remains of the Gematon, a sanctuary to the Aton. On the whole, however, the shock of the Amarna heresy seems to have echoed through Nubia chiefly in the systematic elimination of the name of Amun, which was sedulously erased even in the remotest reaches of the empire. The end of Dynasty XVIII was marked by a single temple built at Faras by Huy, the viceroy of Tutankhamen, and the earliest rulers of Dynasty XIX left few traces in Nubia.

Ramesses I built at Buhen and left there an endowment of clergy and offerings. Sety I dug wells in the



Wadi el Allaqi and also worked at Amara. He built a temple at Aksha, which was later remodeled by *Ramesses II*, and it is possible that he began work at Abu Simbel. *Ramesses II* (1290-1224 B.C.), however, the greatest builder in Egyptian history, was especially active in Nubia. The list of his temples is long: Beit el Wali, Gerf Husein, Wadi es-Sebua, Derr, Aksha, Amara, Tebo; but the most celebrated of them all are the temples of Abu Simbel. They represent the height of achievement in the rock-cut temples characteristic of Nubia. Cut into the bowels of the earth, perhaps in search of the mysteries of Nun — the *primaeva* waters from which all life emerged — did these sanctuaries at Abu Simbel perhaps have some connection with the ceremonies celebrating the annual flood of the Nile which assured the prosperity of all Egypt? In any case, it seems that the massive structures emphasize chiefly the overwhelming might of *Ramesses II*, his deification and that of his Great Royal Wife, which placed them above all mortals.

The facade of the Great Temple at Abu Simbel is in the form of a pylon decorated with four colossi of the king, each twenty meters high and of impressive dignity (Fig. 48). An inconspicuous doorway flanked by a pair of these colossi leads into a sanctuary hewn into the sandstone cliff. About sixty-three meters from the entrance, against the rear wall of the holy of holies, are four rock-hewn sculptures representing Ptah, Amun-Re, the deified King *Ramesses II*, and Re-Harakhty. These figures were illuminated on only two days each year, when the rays of the rising sun entered through the doorway in the facade to animate the gods and the deified king.

Immediately to the north of this temple, *Ramesses II* caused a second sanctuary, of more modest dimensions, to be hewn into the cliff; this was dedicated to his favorite wife, Queen *Nofretari*, who was identified with the goddess *Hathor*. On each side of the doorway to her chapel a statue of the beautiful queen, crowned with the *Hathor* emblem, stands between two figures of King *Ramesses* himself. The daring originality of the architectural concept of these temples cut into the red sandstone of the cliff, their beautiful sculptures and reliefs, and, above all, their dramatic setting, rising into a brilliant, cloudless sky and flanked by avalanches of yellow sand, have long constituted one of the wonders of Egypt.

As is well known, that natural setting no longer exists, for the site of Abu Simbel has now been engulfed by the waters of Lake Nasser. However, after many changes in plan, the rescue of the two greatest edifices of *Ramesses II* was finally accomplished. The temples were cut into great blocks, some of them weighing as much as thirty tons, and carried to the summit of the cliff, where they were reassembled within an artificial mountain. With the most modern techniques and machinery, it required five years of hard work in an inhospitable climate to accomplish this feat. What admiration we should feel for

those men who conceived and carried out the original project more than three thousand years ago!

Through the two temples at Abu Simbel, *Ramesses II* definitely confirmed Egypt's possession of Nubia. After the death of the great conqueror, however, the Egyptian empire suffered a slow decline. Entirely occupied by the rapid evolution of the Near Eastern political situation, by the invasions of the "Peoples of the Sea," and by internal difficulties, the immediate successors of the conqueror had little time to devote to their southern provinces, which fortunately presented few problems. It is true that the reliefs of the funerary temple of *Ramesses III* at Medinet Habu vaunted Nubian victories of that last great ruler of the New Kingdom and listed the names of the peoples and towns conquered in the south. But in spite of certain confirmations of this official propaganda, it seems that Egyptian control of the south was beginning to relax. There are still inscriptions of officials of *Ramesses III* in the temple of Soleb, however, and a last burst of Egyptian pageantry is displayed in the beautiful tomb of *Pennut*, who was governor of Aniba, capital of Wawat, under *Ramesses VI*.

In Egypt proper, the many Kushite mercenaries of the army began to weigh heavily in the politics of a state that was prey to numerous crises and had its authority sapped by the ever-increasing meddling of the priests of Amun. Thus it was a "Chief of the Archers of Kush" who was implicated, with other dignitaries, in the famous harim plot fomented against *Ramesses III*. Under *Ramesses XI*, an uprising in Middle Egypt was repressed by the Viceroy *Panhesy* and his Nubian troops. But not for long: the new High Priest of Amun, *Herihor*, succeeded in obtaining an appointment as viceroy of Nubia and vizier and viceroy of the army, and then he expelled *Ramesses XI* and himself assumed royal

Fig. 47. Ruins of a temple dedicated to Queen *Tiye* at Sedeinga by her husband, *Amenhotep III* (1403-1365 B.C.) (after *Cailliaud 1826*).





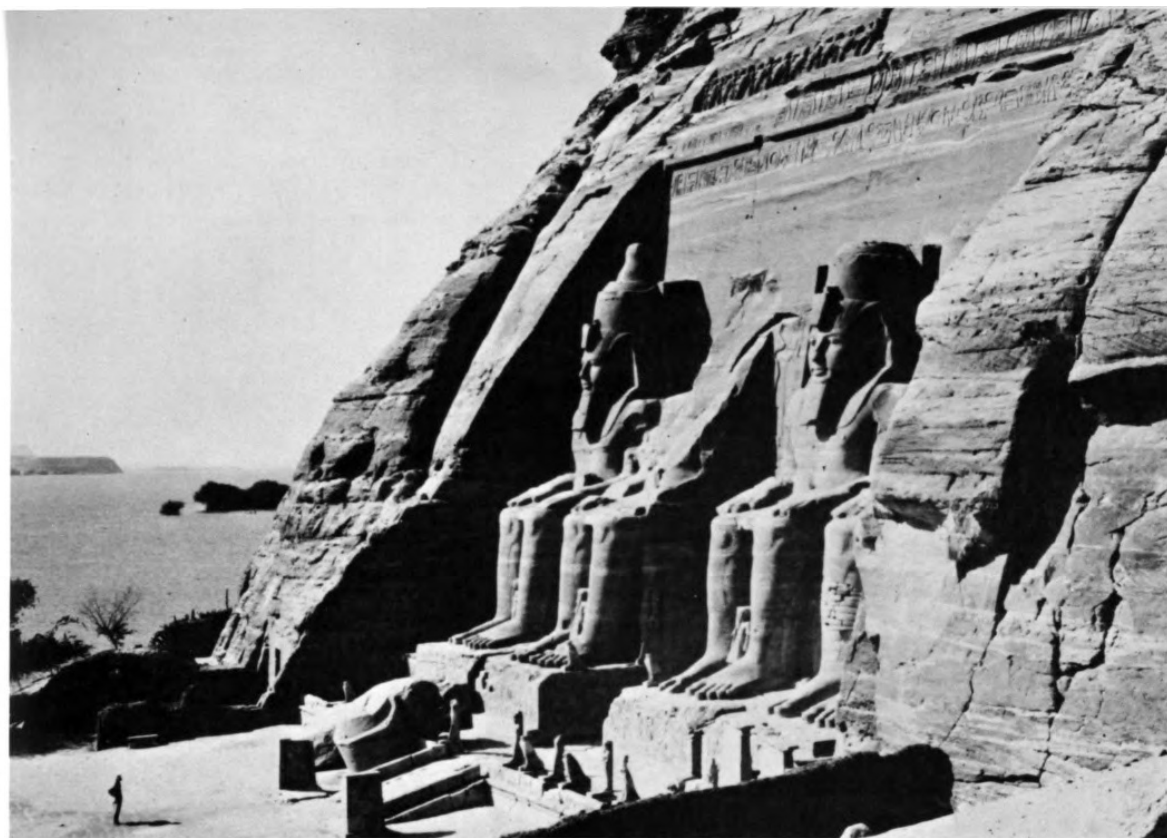


Fig. 48. *The Great Temple of Ramesses II (1290-1224 B.C.) at Abu Simbel.*

power, thus bringing the New Kingdom to an end in around 1080 B.C. In the following decades, the authority of the priest-kings could not reach even to the Delta; the provinces of Asia were forever lost; the Egyptian empire was no more.

Kush, too, again became independent. Reviving the power of Kerma in the plain of Dongola, a strong state grew up around Napata and the great religious center at the foot of Gebel Barkal. Farther north,

however, Lower Nubia fell into a decline. As early as the New Kingdom, that region had been depopulated, perhaps because of a lowering of the Nile caused by slow desiccation. During the Third Intermediate Period of Egypt, there was almost total silence over Nubia and the Sudan. For three centuries, the ancient bond between East Africa and the Mediterranean world remained broken, until the day when Kush, in a reversal of fate, became the conqueror of Egypt.

6

## The Kingdom of Kush

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Karl-Heinz Priebe

In the first decades of Egyptian Dynasty XXI, at approximately 1050 B.C., Egypt's dominion over Nubia came to an end. It was not until around 900 B.C. that a new power subjugated the former Egyptian territory, a power that was to determine the history of the Nile Valley from the First Cataract to beyond Khartoum for no less than a thousand years. This power, called the Kingdom of Napata and Meroe, is also known as the Kingdom of Kush, the name originally given by the Egyptians to their Nubian territories and later adopted, along with other traditional Egyptian designations, by the kings of Kush.

The history of the Kingdom of Kush is divided into two periods, the Napatan Period, lasting until about 270 B.C., and the Meroitic Period, existing until the fall of the kingdom toward the year A.D. 320. This division is based upon changes in the socio-economic and political structure of the kingdom, for which we have as yet only the following evidence:

1. The transfer of the royal cemetery from the region of Napata, near the Fourth Cataract, to Meroe, above the Atbara estuary.
2. The replacement of Egyptian as the only written language by Meroitic, the language of the people who had achieved political dominance from the beginning.
3. The gradual advance of indigenous cultural traditions and modes of perception which in the past had found practically no expression in official religion and art.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history of the Napatan Period are very one-sided. The royal cemeteries near Napata (El Kurru and Nuri, Fig. 49), the cemetery for members of the ruling family and the upper class at Meroe (South and West Begrawiya cemeteries), and the cemetery of the city of Sanam, on the other side of Napata, have been excavated. In addition, temple sites at Napata (Gebel Barkal), Sanam, Kawa, and Tebo, on the Island of Argo — to name only the most important of them — have also been explored. In the course of these excavations, a series of royal inscriptions of a historical nature written in Egyptian have come to light. These finds — together with a series of smaller inscriptions, from temple reliefs and burials — have enabled us to determine the probable succession of rulers, the circumstances of their ascent to the throne, and family relationships within the dynasty. This material has also yielded information regarding military campaigns, temple constructions, and endowments made to the gods. In short, it has enabled us to form a picture of the completely "Egyptianized" culture of the court and the official religion. On the other

hand, the material yields almost no information concerning the ethnic and social structure of the ordinary population; we know little about property rights or government administration. We have learned almost nothing of the socio-economic foundations of the state, which we may regard as the oldest organized "African" state now known to us. Moreover, we know hardly anything about the material and spiritual culture of large segments of the population. We are acquainted with neither the religious views nor the artistic productivity of the masses, for none of their settlements or cemeteries have yet been excavated.

Egyptian sources for study of this period are not very numerous. While the temporary rule of the kings of Kush over the land of the pharaohs in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. resulted in numerous constructions and inscriptions, they tell us very little about conditions in Kush. The same holds true for Assyrian and Old Testament texts that report on the politics of the Kushite kings in the Near East and their battles with the Assyrians.

For the final phase of the Napatan Period, we can draw upon reports of Classical geographers and historians. Of course, most of them were not written until the time of the first Ptolemaic kings, that is, the third century B.C., and some were transmitted only in works of still later writers (Strabo, Diodorus, Pliny), but much of this reported material is applicable to the Napatan Period.

Today we can state with certainty that the ruling class in the Kingdom of Kush was not made up of Egyptian or Libyan immigrants, as was frequently assumed in the past. Most names of members of the royal family, as well as those of officials and priests, prove that they belonged to the people whose language became the written language of the Meroitic Period. These people retained possession of the highest ranks until the fall of the Kingdom of Kush, though certain of them bore Egyptian names. We call them "Meroites." Among the identifiable Meroitic words found in the names of "Napatan" persons, we may note with certainty: *mak*, "God," *malo*, "good," and *mate*, "child, small." In addition, the custom of matrilinear succession (see pp. 84-85) and the development of royal tomb installations reveal that the social and cultural traditions of the ruling class were derived not from the Egyptians but from the peoples of the Upper Nile Valley.

## FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM OF KUSH

The Nile Valley between the Third and Fourth Cataracts and between the Fifth and Sixth Cataracts



Fig. 49. Pyramids at Nuri, Napatan Period.

formed the nucleus of the Kingdom of Kush. In the southern part of the kingdom, the area in which the Kushites first settled extended into the great wadis of the interior of the "Island of Meroe," the territory included between the Atbara, the Nile, and the Blue Nile. Some larger centers, such as Musawwarat es-Sufra, must have already existed there in Napatan times. It is difficult to estimate how far the kingdom extended toward the south. The southernmost monument of a Napatan king was found near Khartoum, but it may have been brought there at a later date (Sphinx of Aspelta, Khartoum 11777). Lower Nubia had been from the beginning a constituent of the Kingdom of Kush, or was at least claimed as such, although it was not so important during the Napatan Period as it was to become during the Meroitic Period.

The population of the Nile Valley probably did not consist of a single ethnic group. The region around Meroe was certainly the dwelling place of the Meroites. In the Nile Valley south of the Third Cataract, Nubian-speaking peoples probably existed as early as the New Kingdom, or perhaps even earlier, as can be deduced from the names of some localities in the area (Priese 1973). The extent to which pastoral tribes west and east of the Nile Valley accepted the sovereignty of the Kushite kings is in some

doubt. Nubian tribes lived in the Bayuda, the large desert steppe extending from a point south of Napata to the region of Meroe. Greek reports note that these tribes existed independently under their own kings. In the Eastern Desert lived the Blemmyes, the ancestors of the Beja of today. According to Greek accounts, this group must have been at times subject to the "Ethiopians." Indeed, the inscriptions of Napatan kings inform us of repeated conflicts with them.

We are still unable to answer with certainty the questions of when, from what region, and under what circumstances the Kingdom of Kush arose. The most ancient graves in the cemetery of El Kurru reach back five generations of rulers prior to Kashta (760-742 B.C., Gen. 1). This would take us back almost to 900 B.C. The oldest ruler known to us by name, however, is Alara (Gen. E), probably the immediate predecessor of Kashta. Alara is mentioned only in later inscriptions but generally in a context which permits us to surmise that he was the founder of the kingdom. In the seventh century B.C., Taharqo (690-664 B.C., Gen. 5) claims to have derived his power from Alara's intercession on behalf of his (Taharqo's) grandmother (Stelae Khartoum 2678, 2679). Irike-Amanote (431-405 B.C., Gen. 21) wishes for himself a reign as long as that of Alara (Macadam 1949,





Fig. 50. View of Gebel Barkal, the "Holy Mountain," from the southeast.

Inscription Kawa IX). Finally, Nastasen (335-315 B.C., Gen. 27) speaks of a place on the road between Meroe and Napata as that from which Alara "sprouted" and claims that he himself was invested in Napata with the "might, victorious power" of this ancestor (Cat. 72). The genealogy of the female ancestors of King Aspelta (593-568 B.C., Gen. 10) comes to an end at the latest two generations before Alara (Stela Cairo JE 48866). Historical recollections, therefore, scarcely reach further back than 800 B.C.

The Kingdom of Kush had two centers. One was Napata, at the foot of Gebel Barkal, which the Egyptians were the first to term the "Holy Mountain" (Fig. 50). During the New Kingdom, Napata had been an Egyptian administrative seat with several small temples. The cemeteries of the Napatan kings at El Kurru and Nuri (ca. 900-300 B.C.) were located nearby. Since Napata remained the most important religious center throughout the period, we might well conclude that the dynasty originated in this region. Unfortunately, the place which Nastasen names as Alara's birthplace cannot be further localized; it may have been Sanam Abu Dom, at the end of the road through the Bayuda between Meroe and Napata.

The other Kushite center, Meroe, probably played a

much more significant role at a far earlier date than has previously been assumed. From the beginning of the fifth century B.C., Meroe had been the permanent royal residence of the Kushite kings, who now went to Napata only on their "coronation journeys" (see p. 85) and for their burials. By the time of Harsiyotef (404-369 B.C., Gen. 23), the royal palace in Napata had become uninhabitable and the temples were in poor condition (Stela Cairo JE 48864). It is generally assumed that the royal residence was transferred to Meroe in 591 B.C., in connection with the Egyptian-Kushite war (see p. 80), but this assumption is contradicted by the fact that from the time of Piye (747-716 B.C., Gen. 2) at the latest, only the kings and the royal wives and mothers were buried near Napata. The other members of the royal family were buried near Meroe, as were also a group of people which included a number of Egyptians, perhaps court officials or leading artisans. We can conclude from the report of King Tanwetamani's (Gen. 6) coronation in 664 B.C. (Stela Cairo JE 48863) that even he had visited Napata only on his way to Egypt. Excavations still in progress at Meroe have established a settlement at the periphery of the city dating from the seventh century B.C. In addition, the following facts are relevant; While the private cemetery of Sanam demonstrates specific connections with the C-



group culture and perhaps with the Kerma culture as well, the inventories of tombs in the royal cemetery of El Kurru show absolutely no such relationships. The fact that the latter is so decisively "Egyptianized" gives rise to the suspicion that there was very little to connect the Kushite kings with the indigenous traditions of the region around Napata, but that the kings leaned rather upon the Egyptian traditions then prevailing in Nubia. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that the old centers of Egyptian power, as well as the Egyptian gods themselves, once again came to hold a preeminent position (see pp. 86-88). It is consequently conceivable that the original homeland of the Meroites and their kings was in the region of Meroe.

The political circumstances that gave rise to the foundation of the kingdom are still completely unknown. Intensive archaeological research in Lower Nubia has observed a disappearance of the C-group culture beginning during Dynasty XVIII but has produced no evidence that this culture was supplanted by new indigenous elements. Field research in Upper Nubia is still in such a state of infancy that it is not possible to determine the fate of the Kerma culture or to draw any conclusions about the native population and its social and political structure during the period of Egyptian rule and the two centuries thereafter.

#### FOREIGN RELATIONS

By the time of Kashta (Gen. 1) at the latest (ca. 760 B.C.), the first stage in the history of the Kingdom of Kush, namely, the period of its foundation, had come to an end. During this phase, Egyptian culture and religion had secured a preeminent position in the Kushite kingdom. In Egypt, the sovereign power of Dynasties XXII and XXIII, both of which were of Libyan origin, and disintegrated into several rival territorial principalities. For unknown reasons, at around 760 B.C. Upper Egypt fell into the hands of Kashta, who assumed the title of pharaoh and transmitted to his daughter Amenirdas I the politically important office of "Divine Consort of Amun," the god with whom sovereignty in Upper Egypt was associated. Amenirdas I was adopted by Shepenwepet I, the last representative of the Theban dynasty. As a consequence of this action, Kashta's successor, Piye (at the latest), who died in 716 B.C., became involved in the struggles for sovereignty in Egypt. His chief opponent was Tefnakht, a prince of the Western Delta, who was himself preparing to subjugate neighboring principalities. Because of this, Piye was forced to take action. He caused a detailed account of his war against Tefnakht in the nineteenth and twentieth years of his reign to be recorded on a magnificent stela erected in the Great Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal (Cairo JE 48862). Tefnakht was defeated, and a status quo was temporarily secured in Egypt. Tefnakht's son Bocchoris resumed hostilities, but he in turn was defeated and killed by Piye's successor, Shabaqo (716-702 B.C., Gen. 3; Fig. 51). Shabaqo forced the

Fig. 51. Detail of Cat. 70 showing the head of King Shabaqo (716-702 B.C.) (Berlin/DDR 2103).



Fig. 52. The Great Temple of Amun (B 500) seen from Gebel Barkal.



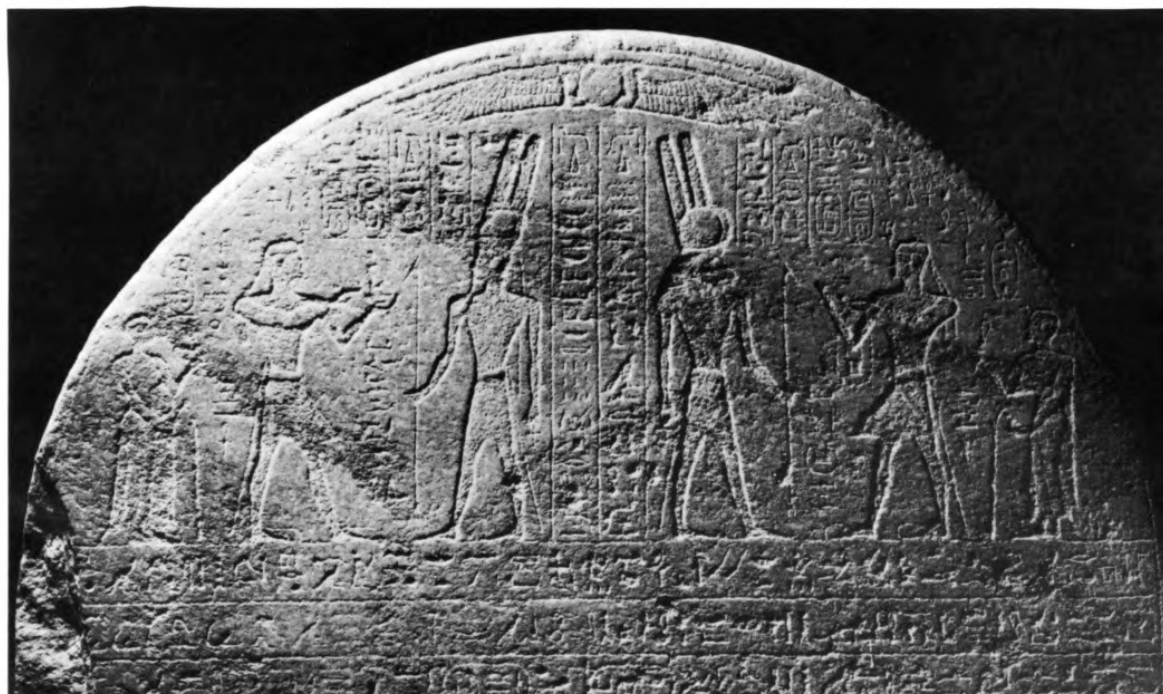


Fig. 53. Detail of a stela of King Tanwetamani (664-653 B.C.) from the Great Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal (Cairo JE 48863).

recognition of himself as pharaoh throughout Egypt, and he and his two successors, Shebitqo (702-690 B.C., Gen. 4) and Taharqo (690-664 B.C., Gen. 5), were named by later historians as constituting the Egyptian Dynasty XXV.

The reign of these Kushite pharaohs was for Egypt a time of economic and cultural recovery lasting several decades. The rulers made every effort to correspond to the image of legitimate pharaohs. Construction on behalf of the gods was given fresh impetus, the like of which had not been seen for a long time. Old religious literature was newly edited, and ancient designs for the decoration of temples and tombs were revived. Generally speaking, archaizing tendencies in literature and art were actively promoted by the Kushites not only in Egypt but in Kush itself. The ideology of the kingship and also that of official Nubian religion, art, and literature were now almost totally informed by Egyptian ideas. Egyptian architects and artisans were employed in Kush itself. Although Piye undertook extensive renovation of the old Temple of Amun at Napata (Fig. 52), under Shabaqo and Shebitqo construction in Kush appears to have been limited. Taharqo, however, again focused attention upon his country's important centers and their places of worship. The builders of the Temple of Kawa were imported from Memphis. Personnel for conducting religious services and cult rituals were transplanted from

Egypt to Kawa; they included members of the upper classes of "the whole land," and among them were "wives of the princes of Lower Egypt." Vintagers to tend the vineyards were brought from the Near East (Stelae Khartoum 2678, 2679).

With Taharqo, the reign of the Kushites over Egypt approaches its end. Shabaqo had made some effort to cultivate good relations with the Assyrian kingdom, which had just subjugated Syria and Palestine. Shebitqo, on the other hand, had supported the efforts of the small states of Syria and Palestine to achieve independence from Assyria, and in the year 701 B.C., a Kushite army under Prince (later King) Taharqo met the Assyrians in a battle near Altaku, in Palestine. In 671 B.C., however, an Assyrian army drove the Kushites out of Lower and Middle Egypt. Taharqo was nevertheless able to establish himself again (669-664 B.C.), and his successor, Tanwetamani (Fig. 53), succeeded in retaking Memphis. However, with two new Assyrian campaigns, the sack of Thebes, and the transfer of allegiance by the West Delta princes to the Assyrians, the Kushite reign came to an end. In the year 655 B.C., Shepenwepet II, the last Kushite divine consort, adopted the daughter of the first ruler of Egyptian Dynasty XXVI as her successor, an event which is reported on a famous stela (Cairo JE 36327).

We have no information concerning the role of Kush

in the subsequent struggles of the great Mediterranean powers. After Tanwetamani's report of his Egyptian campaign on his stela in Napata, the inscriptions of the Kushite kings maintain absolute silence on the subject of Kush's relationship with Egypt or, indeed, with any other state. This silence is all the more regrettable, since it would be helpful to know the extent to which continuing direct influences from the north should be taken into consideration in evaluating the cultural and artistic development of Nubia during the three centuries that followed.

Half a century after Kushite rule in Egypt ended, the Egyptians made an attempt to banish all memory of its existence. The names of the pharaohs of Dynasty XXV were hacked away from the monuments and generally replaced by the name of Psamtik II (595-589 B.C.), and one or both of the uraei were removed from the heads of royal statues and reliefs. The immediate cause for this reaction was a war that broke out in the year 591 B.C. According to the Egyptian version, Psamtik II sent an army up the Nile to thwart the military plans of the Kushites. The best-known testimony regarding this campaign is provided by the graffiti of Greek, Carian, and Phoenician mercenaries on the leg of one of the colossi of Abu Simbel. More information is provided by two inscriptions of the Egyptian king. According to one of these inscriptions, which, unfortunately, is very fragmentary (Stela of Tanis, Cairo JE 67095: Sauneron —Yoyotte 1952), a battle occurred near a small place called the "residence of the *qore*" who "was there" (*qore* is the Meroitic title of the Kushite king). The Egyptians were victorious in this battle, and the *qore* probably withdrew to Meroe. It remains uncertain whether or not the Egyptian army advanced as far as Napata on that occasion and was responsible for the eradication of the names of Kushite kings and for the destruction of their statues in the temples at that place. According to the text of a second inscription (stelae in Karnak and New Kalabsha: Sauneron—Yoyotte 1952; Bakry 1967), Tebo, which is located to the south of the Third Cataract, was reached by the Egyptians and here, too, a battle ensued. The stelae call special attention to the unfavorable conditions of the battleground and to the courage of the Kushites, of whom 4,200 were taken prisoner. Presumably the Kushites were defending the entrance to the plains of Dongola.

There were doubtless other causes that contributed to tense relations between Egypt and Kush. According to Greek tradition (Herodotus 2. 30), a mutinous Egyptian garrison withdrew from Elephantine to "Ethiopia" and settled south of Meroe at the time of Psamtik I (664-610 B.C.). Greek travelers of Ptolemaic times claim to have come across the descendants of this garrison at the Blue Nile and even farther to the southeast.

According to Greek reports, which are both unclear and contradictory, the Persian King Cambyses (529-521 B.C.) undertook a campaign against "Ethiopia"

after the conquest of Egypt in 525 B.C. Herodotus (3. 25) says that the army was in great part destroyed because of a lack of provisions, and that therefore Cambyses had to retreat. Strabo (17. 1. 54) mentions the desert areas near Qasr Ibrim as the region where the Persians were overwhelmed by a sandstorm. Other Greek sources allege that Cambyses was the founder of Meroe. This allegation is completely impossible. Although later Greek travelers associated individual localities in the Nubian Nile Valley with Cambyses, referring in their reports to "storehouses of Cambyses" and so forth, only Lower Nubia can have fallen into a state of more or less loose dependence upon the Persian Empire and even so only until the end of the fifth century. If "Ethiopian" contingents did actually fight in the army of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.), they can only have been mercenaries. The fact that Darius (521-486 B.C.) and Xerxes list "Kushiya" among the dependent peoples has nothing more than symbolic significance. Diplomatic relations certainly existed; Kushites are represented, for example, as envoys in Persepolis. According to Herodotus (3. 97), the "Ethiopians above Egypt" sent "gifts" to the Persians every three years (gold, ivory, ebony, five boys) but paid no tribute. In his building inscription found in Susa, Darius mentions that the ivory used in building the Palace of Susa came from "Kushiya."

The Egyptian rulers of the fourth century (Dynasties XXVII-XXX, 404-342 B.C.) presumably found political support in Kush. The last pharaoh of Dynasty XXX, Nectanebo II (360-342 B.C.), is said to have fled to "Ethiopia" after the Persian victory in 342 B.C. Lower Nubia was evidently once again more closely allied to the Kingdom of Kush in these decades. In the eleventh year of his reign (393 B.C.), King Harsiyotef sent an army to Akin in Lower Nubia in order "to punish his rebellious slaves whose names were Barag and Sa-Amanis. Aswan was reached. It [the king's army] fought with them. It killed Barag and Sa-Amanis and all those who belonged to them" (Stela Cairo JE 48864).

In the year 342 B.C., Egypt was reconquered by the Persians, but by 332 B.C. it was in the hands of Alexander the Great. Into this period falls the short reign of one Khababash in Egypt. In Hintze's view (1959, 17-20), this ruler is the same hostile prince against whom the Kushite King Nastasen had to defend himself in the first year of his reign (335 B.C.), for his enemy had ships and certainly came down from the north. Nastasen ordered his army to set out from Derr (?) to defeat his opponent, from whom he took territories which must have been located in Lower Nubia but which, unfortunately, cannot be more precisely designated (Cat. 72). Khababash does not have an Egyptian name, but his origin is debatable. He has been viewed both as an "Ethiopian" and as a Persian satrap. In any case, the political background, as well as the entire sequence of events that occurred at this time, remains obscure.

On the other hand, reports of conflicts with nomadic



peoples run like a red thread through the historical inscriptions of the kings of Kush. These peoples lived in the immediate and surrounding areas of the Nile Valley and even controlled stretches of the river itself. The most important of them were the multi-branched tribes of the Blemmyes, whose homeland was the Eastern Desert. We first encounter them in an inscription of King Anlamani (623-593 B.C., Gen. 9), which records a campaign against them resulting in a booty rich in women, children, and cattle; that only four men could be captured is typical of battles with nomads (Stela Copenhagen NCG 1709).

At the time of King Harsiyotef (Gen. 23), the same nomad tribes attempted to establish themselves in Lower Nubia. In the third, fifth, and sixth years of his reign, campaigns against the Blemmyes probably involved the possession of Derr and perhaps also of Qasr Ibrim. The enemy's cattle and people ("male and female slaves") were

captured and the nomad chieftain finally submitted to the Kushite king: "You are my god! I am your slave! I am a woman! Do not take the field against me!" As a token of submission, he sent earth (?) "in the hands of a man" (Stela Cairo JE 48864; Fig. 54), earth and water being the tokens of submission that the Persians customarily demanded. The same tribes also made predatory incursions into the Nile Valley of Upper Nubia. At the time of Irike-Amanote (Gen. 21), the area around Korti was overrun (Inscription Kawa IX), and at the time of Nastasen the temples at Kawa and at Tar, which was perhaps located at the Fourth Cataract, were plundered. Only once did this people relinquish their captured booty.

Equally tenacious opponents were the Adadas, who inhabited territories to the north and northeast of Meroe. Just as Irike-Amanote began his reign, the Adadas were preparing "to advance into the area around the 'province' of Meroe together with their herds of big

*Fig. 54. Detail of a stela of King Harsiyotef (404-369 B.C.) from the Great Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal (Cairo JE 48864).*



animals, small animals, people, and all their goods," "more numerous than the sands." People and cattle belonging to the local population fell into their hands. When they were subsequently defeated, "all the children and all the women" in the vicinity of Meroe helped to bring in the booty (Inscription Kawa IX). Harsiyotef (Gen. 23) fought the Adadas in the second, eighteenth, and twenty-third years of his reign: twice they had advanced "with all their goods" into "the interior of Meroe." At the time of Nastasen (Gen. 27), they took a city called Masa, which had still belonged to Kush under Harsiyotef. The prince of this town was captured; the Beja word "fox" is recognizable in his name, Ubasho.

It is primarily in Nastasen's report (Cat. 72), which has repeatedly been mentioned, that we can read of further campaigns against other peoples who are unknown to us. In these forays, huge quantities of cattle, people, and gold were ostensibly taken as booty, and one has the impression that the Kushite army undertook raids in order to bring in the wealth that the king passed on with a generous hand to the gods. If statements regarding the animal wealth of the tribes concerned are not greatly exaggerated, we are probably dealing with the inhabitants of areas to the south and southwest of the Meroitic heartland: the Nubai, who lived west of the Nile and who are mentioned by Eratosthenes, and the Noba, who settled in the lower reaches of the Blue Nile and occupied the Meroitic area some centuries later (see p. 107).

#### THE NAPATAN ECONOMY

For the most part, the great masses of people indigenous to the Nile Valley were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding. The arable lands on the banks of the Nile were, in contrast to those of Egypt, generally very narrow and discontinuous. The *shaduf*, a type of oversized ladle, was certainly sometimes used for irrigation; but the *sakia* (water wheel) was not introduced until the Meroitic Period, and extensive canal building was undertaken in only a very few places, such as the Kerma basin. After the annual summer rains, the plains of the great wadis of the Island of Meroe could be cultivated, as they still are today by the inhabitants of the villages along the Nile. We do not know whether or not the *hafir*, a reservoir typical of this region (see p. 89), was already in use during the Napatan Period.

Besides barley and spelt, durra (millet) was also cultivated by the end of the Napatan Period at the latest. Following older sources, Agatharchides, whose writings date from about 150 B.C., characterized the "Ethiopians" as planters of durra and of sesame, which is also mentioned in the inscription of Nastasen. Greek travelers were not favorably impressed by local achievements in agriculture and cattle breeding; they reported that the "breeding stock is small in size: sheep, goats, oxen; the dogs are also small but vicious and snappish . . . The Ethiopians live on millet and barley from which they also

prepare a beverage. They have no oil but they do have butter and suet; they have no fruits except for some dates found in the royal gardens" (Strabo 17. 2. 2). Thus, Harsiyotef (Gen. 23) considers it important to mention in the annals of his reign that six date palms were planted in Napata and six in Meroe on behalf of the god Amun (Stela Cairo JE 48864). It was only in temple and palace gardens that the cultivation of vineyards was attempted; for the tending of the vines Taharqo (Gen. 5) imported specialists from Syria (Stela Khartoum 2679).

The breeding of horses constituted a special branch of animal husbandry. The horse, used primarily for military purposes, enjoyed the special favor of the kings. The horses of a king were sacrificed after his death and buried in their master's cemetery; in the cemetery of El Kurru alone, slain horses have been found in the burials of four kings. Piye (Gen. 2) appears to have been particularly fond of horses. In the report of his war with Egyptian princes, the greatest reproach he could make to the kinglet Namarut was that the latter had allowed his horses to starve during the siege of his city (Stela Cairo JE 48862; see p. 78).

It is probable that agricultural production was primarily the concern of the village community. We never hear of a confrontation between local or regional representatives, on the one hand, and the central administration and its local representatives, on the other. But it is interesting to note that tribal communities were in some instances attached to temples. Thus, the temples at Kawa and Tebo demanded of King Irike-Amanote (Gen. 21) the return of such communities for the performance of religious services of the cult (Inscription Kawa IX). Among these communities were the *Irame*, one of the most important tribes of Upper Nubia, which can be traced back to the Old Kingdom (Priese 1974). For the most part, the higher priestly offices appear to have been in the hands of "families," or, more precisely, "kinship units."

It is certain that the temples and the royal courts possessed land, people, and cattle. Most of the people and herds of cattle captured as war booty flowed directly into their hands. Only once do we hear that the general population was permitted direct access to the possessions of a defeated enemy. It is perhaps no mere matter of chance that this event occurred in the region of Meroe. How the king and the temples managed their possessions is unknown. Moreover, and perhaps most important, it remains unclear whether or not such possessions were sufficiently extensive to warrant the development of large-scale production on the basis of slavery. The primary form of exploitation in the Kingdom of Kush was probably the requisition of surplus products from the rural population for the use of court and temples.

The artisans attached to court and temples produced works fashioned in a completely Egyptian style, and at the time of Dynasty XXV they were no doubt themselves



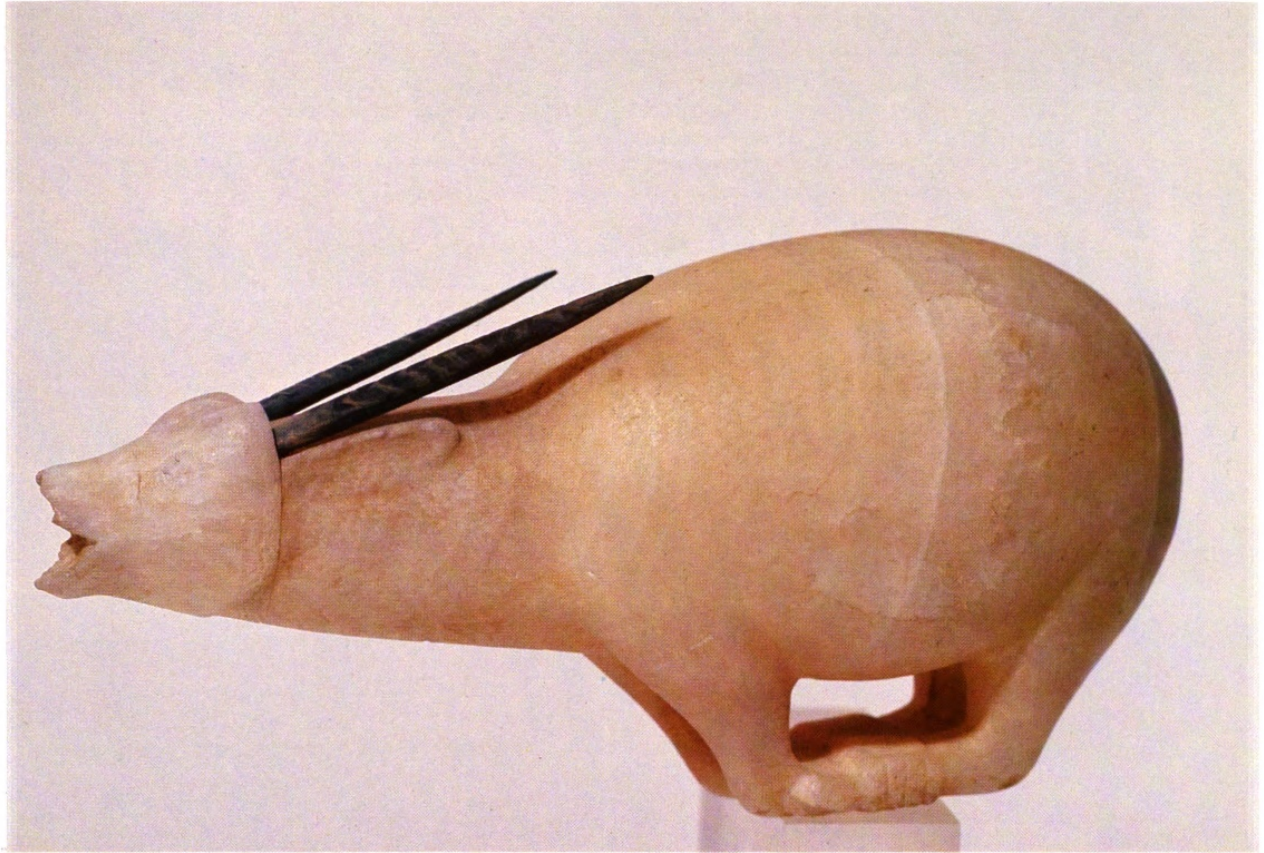


Fig. 55. Calcite vessel in the form of a bound antelope (Cat. 102), Napatan Period, beginning of the seventh century B.C. (Boston 24.879).

frequently Egyptians. The presence of these craftsmen in rather large numbers is confirmed not only by written sources but by burials in the cemeteries of Sanam and Meroe, where the graves of artisans are distinguished from those of the indigenous population by the Egyptian method of burial.

The extraction and use of the more valuable raw materials must certainly have been a royal monopoly. Concerning the Island of Meroe, Strabo (17. 2. 2) mentions copper, iron, and gold mines as well as precious stones; iron, however, was used remarkably little in Napatan times. Big-game hunting was of great importance, for the country owed much of its wealth to the export of products obtained from wild animals, such as ivory and skins. During this period, the elephant still inhabited the vicinity of Meroe as well as the region of Ed-Debba.

Foreign trade was doubtless also a royal monopoly. Although no statements can be made at present with regard to the extent and range of this trade during the Napatan Period, we can assume that trade relations

existed primarily with Egypt. It is often very difficult to ascertain whether objects found in Nubia were imported or locally manufactured (Cat. 102; Fig. 55). Some objects, such as the double-handled alabaster vessels found in burials, must be considered Egyptian imports. However, the granite sarcophagi of Kings Anlamani (Gen. 9) and Aspelta (Gen. 10), which look completely Egyptian, are probably made of granite from the region of the Third Cataract (Khartoum 1868 and Boston 23.729; Fig. 56).

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE

In contrast to the ordinary population, there existed in Kush an upper class that included the members of the royal family, the court, the bureaucracy, and the priesthood. The army can probably also be placed within the upper class, if the assumption is correct that the militia consisted primarily of a tribal army of the Meroites (see p. 86).

At the head of the state stood the *qore*, meaning "chief" or "ruler"; his insignia of office was a tightly fitting cap. From the period of Kushite rule in Egypt, two uraei





Fig. 56. Granite sarcophagus of King Aspelta (593-568 B.C.) from his pyramid at Nuri (Nu. 8) (Boston 23.729).

were fastened to this cap, and a diadem with dangling ends encircled it. Aside from this diadem and a few ornaments not customary in Egypt, the king is represented entirely as an Egyptian pharaoh. He uses the five-part pharaonic titulary, and the inscriptions refer to him in traditional Egyptian terms. Like the pharaoh, he is considered to be the son of the gods, who have endowed him with sovereign power. Some of the inscriptions, however, clearly reveal that the office of the Kushite king was established on a completely independent, one might

say, African base. This is to be seen first of all in the matrilinear order of succession. As one Greek source has expressed it: "The kings generally do not hand the throne down to their own sons but rather to the sons of their sisters. If, however, no legitimate successor is available, the handsomest and most warlike male of all is elected as king" (Desanges 1968,86-97). It was possible for several sons of the king's sisters to inherit the throne in succession, as did Anlamani and Aspelta, the sons of Nasalsa, the "king's mother and the mistress of Kush."



Only because brother-sister marriage was customary, as it was in Egypt, could the sons of a king acquire a legitimate claim to the throne. The matrilinear order of succession makes it possible for us to understand certain texts, such as two inscriptions of Taharqo which claim that King Alara had begged the god Amun to confer sovereignty upon the offspring of his sisters (among them, Taharqo's mother) and not upon Alara's own children (Stelae Khartoum 2678; Copenhagen NCG 1712). Anlamani utters the same plea on behalf of his mother's descendants (Stela Copenhagen NCG 1709). In his coronation report (Stela Cairo JE 48866; Fig. 57), Aspelta renders an account of his maternal ancestors through seven generations.

There was also an election of the king, in which the personal qualities of the candidate played a part. This fact is reported by Greek writers (Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus), who also note that the successor to the throne had to be the greatest and most powerful man, the richest and the most experienced in animal husbandry. We learn nothing about this practice from the Kushite inscriptions themselves, but they do reveal that ascension to the throne was a public occasion at which a convocation of the military forces laid claim to what was at least a formal right to vote. The frequently mentioned inscription of King Irike-Amanote at Kawa, which unfortunately is very fragmentary, describes the procedure in detail. At the death of the king, the army convenes and proceeds to the palace. There, the absence of a leader is lamented to the court officials. At the same time, a successor is named and the wish expressed to place him on the throne. The palace officials concur, and the new king, who as "an excellent youth sat among the king's brothers," is led into the royal palace. What we see here is quite clearly a hereditary kingdom, but one in which the successor still required confirmation by the army, evidently a convocation of all conscriptable members of the ruling tribe.

In one instance, the army abdicated its "right to vote" in favor of the oracular decision of the god Amun of Napata (Stela of Aspelta, Cairo JE 48866). Of course, this is — at least at first sight — only another form of proclamation, which must have had nothing to do with any fundamental role of the priesthood as "kingmaker." Greek writers, however, report that "in ancient times" priests chose the king and on several occasions even forced him to end his reign through suicide (Strabo 17. 2. 3). According to Diodorus 3. 5, the priests first selected among themselves a series of suitable candidates and then allowed the oracle to endow one of them with sovereign power. Since the influence of the priests is said to have been forcibly ended at a time which coincided with the beginning of the Meroitic Period (see pp. 94-95), a supremacy of the priests must have existed within the Napatan Period. It is possible that a move toward ending that supremacy, in the final phase of the Napatan Period, might perhaps be documented in the temporary transfer

of the royal cemeteries directly to Gebel Barkal (see p. 94). The inscriptions themselves yield only vague statements; Nastasen says, for example, that he had been "called" by the Amun of Napata (Cat. 72).

After his ascension to the throne in Meroe, the king would customarily set out on a "coronation journey." He would go first to Napata and proceed from there to Kawa and Tebo. In each locality on his route, he would present himself to the gods and be furnished by them with symbols of sovereignty and power. The coronation journey was generally an occasion on which commissions were granted for the restoration of places of worship. It was also a time when the procession route, for instance, was cleared of sand, new priestly offices were created, and property previously removed from temples was restored to them. In general, the coronation journey had as its purpose "the creation of order in all the provinces."

During the period of Kushite rule in Egypt, the king himself led his army in military campaigns, as did Piye (Gen. 2), Taharqo (Gen. 5), and Tanwetamani (Gen. 6). Later on, this custom no longer appears to have been the rule. In Nastasen's (Gen. 27) inscription, it is said of him: "He will have his seat in Meroe and will dwell there."

The Greeks noticed that the king rarely appeared in public. As in Egypt and in many African kingdoms of later date, the ruler was certainly an unapproachable and remote personality. This fact led the Greeks to speak of the worship of the king as a god. However, the inscriptions do not speak of the king's having been endowed with attributes signifying either sacred ordination or divine functions. He merely possessed certain mythical qualities that had been adopted from Egypt.

It is more or less self-evident that, given the role they played in determining succession to the throne, the female members of the dynasty held a preeminent position in society. The "mother of the king" and the "sisters of the king" appear in official representations and inscriptions to an extent unknown in Egypt. On the Stela of Aspelta (Cairo JE 48866; Fig. 57), it is his mother who appears before the god to plead for sovereign power on behalf of her son. A memorial stela erected by Aspelta for Khaliut, a son of Piye, in the Great Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal (Temple B 500), has Khaliut beg for a long reign for Aspelta "together with Nasalsa, the mother of the king." The god Horus and his mother, Isis, were seen reflected in the king and his mother. The "mother of the king and the mistress of Kush," designated by the Meroitic title *kandake*, was viewed within the Graeco-Roman world as the actual sovereign.

Our information with regard to the size and structure of the court is insufficient, since the courtiers — in contrast to those of the Meroitic Period — did not leave their own inscriptions on sacrificial tablets or on tomb stelae. The same lack of inscriptions is true of civil servants and priests. Royal inscriptions mention the "friends," later known in Meroitic texts as *salakhas*.

These "friends" aided the king in cult functions and were also entrusted with military leadership. Other titles of rank also existed at this time; among them were "Prince of Nubia" and "Great One of His Majesty" or "Great Man of the Royal House." Then there were also whole series of officials such as the "Head Seal-Bearer of the Royal House," the "Chief Scribe of Kush," the "Royal Scribe and Head Barn and Granary Superintendent," and so forth. A few civil servants of this type had Egyptian names at the time of Aspelta (Stela Louvre C 257).

We know nothing of the administrative organization of individual sections of the country. The inscriptions speak of "provinces," but it remains a matter of debate whether or not this word carried the same meaning as it did in Egypt. We know that a son of Piye had been a "Prince/Governor of Kanda" (a place whose precise location is unknown). Of the "two rebellious slaves" in Lower Nubia who were fought by Harsiyotef (see p. 80), at least one bore a Meroitic name. We may assume that they held positions corresponding to that of high-level civil servants of this area in later Meroitic times (see p. 102).

Of the priests, we know only those groups active in the great centers of the official cults. They were divided into those ranks that were customary in Egypt. A text from the Temple of Sanam (Stela Louvre C 257) mentions a second, third, and fourth "servant of god" (high priest). The office of the first servant of god is not mentioned, and perhaps the king himself was regarded as the holder of this office. A "scribe of the word of god," seven *wab*-priests (who saw to the everyday cult observances), three "superintendents" (who were perhaps entrusted with the administration of temple property), and a "temple scribe" are also listed in the Louvre text.

Many women belonged to the temple personnel. In each of the temples of Napata, Sanam, Kawa, and Tebo, Anlamani (Gen. 9) created the position of "sistrum player," an office which he dispensed to his sisters (Stela Copenhagen NCG 1709). One of these sisters became the wife of Aspelta, and when Aspelta later became king, he transferred her office by decree to another sister (Stela Louvre C 257). In general, the sovereign appears to have had the freedom and the power to establish and dispose of priestly offices. It is reported on the stela of an unknown king, probably still belonging to Dynasty XXV (Cairo JE 48865), that he removed two priestly families from their offices because they had made a murderous attempt "on the life of a person who had not committed a crime." If the king was present at a temple, especially during his coronation journey, it was he who conducted the religious festivals and carried the cult image of the deity in procession (Inscription of Irike-Amanote, Kawa IX).

On the basis of the inscriptions, no subordination of the king to the priesthood can be established. As in Egypt, the sovereign himself was considered to be the highest and, theoretically, the only priest and partner of the gods. The temporary ascendancy of the priesthood, which has

been mentioned above, was probably a *result of the close* ties that existed between the Napatan monarchy and the state religion. It was probably priests alone who possessed knowledge of and provided counsel in an ideology that was not necessarily rooted in the people itself. Since mastery of the Egyptian language and, therefore, also of the religious literature was probably limited to the priests, it seems just to assume that Egyptians were members of the priesthood for a very long time. Of the fifteen persons listed as belonging to the Temple of Sanam, four possessed Egyptian names.

We have already noted the political function of the army in the "election of the king." This function is only comprehensible, however, if we assume that the army was not conscripted from the entire kingdom but consisted, rather, of able-bodied members of the tribe to which the dynasty itself belonged. In other words, the military force consisted of a tribal army of Meroites. During major wars, this army was doubtless supplemented by contingents drawn from the rest of the population, particularly during the period of Kushite rule in Egypt. For example, among the troops used by Piye during his campaign were men who understood the new technique of laying siege; and his troops stationed in Egypt were subordinate to a Meroitic as well as to an Egyptian general (the latter, incidentally, of Libyan descent). In the inscription of King Irike-Amanote at Kawa, we find the royal army appearing as an entourage that accompanies the king on his coronation journey and joins him in celebrating the sacred festivals. There are several references to this army as the partner of the king; it is given this designation in front of the "friends," that is, the courtiers.

The troops were divided into two groups, foot soldiers and cavalry. Their weapons consisted of lances, axes, and short swords. The bow, however, was the typical Nubian weapon. Before the Middle Kingdom, Nubian mercenaries in Egyptian service were armed with bows (Fischer 1961) and even much later, in the Middle Ages, the archers of the central Nile Valley were much feared because of their marksmanship. The king was endowed by Amun of Kawa with bows and arrows. Round or oblong shields served as protection. The "Ethiopians" who fought in the armies of Xerxes wore panther or lion skins and during battle colored their "bodies half with chalk and half with red lead," according to Herodotus. Head protection was evidently not customary.

During the New Kingdom, the majority of Egyptian temples in Nubia were consecrated to the national god Amun. For this reason, Amun also occupied a preeminent position in the official religion of the Kingdom of Kush from its very beginning. The Kushite monarchy had consciously attached itself to the traditions of the Egyptian kings and had at first restored former Egyptian centers of worship. Amun was the "god of the kings of Kush" (Stela of Aspelta, Cairo JE 48866), and the



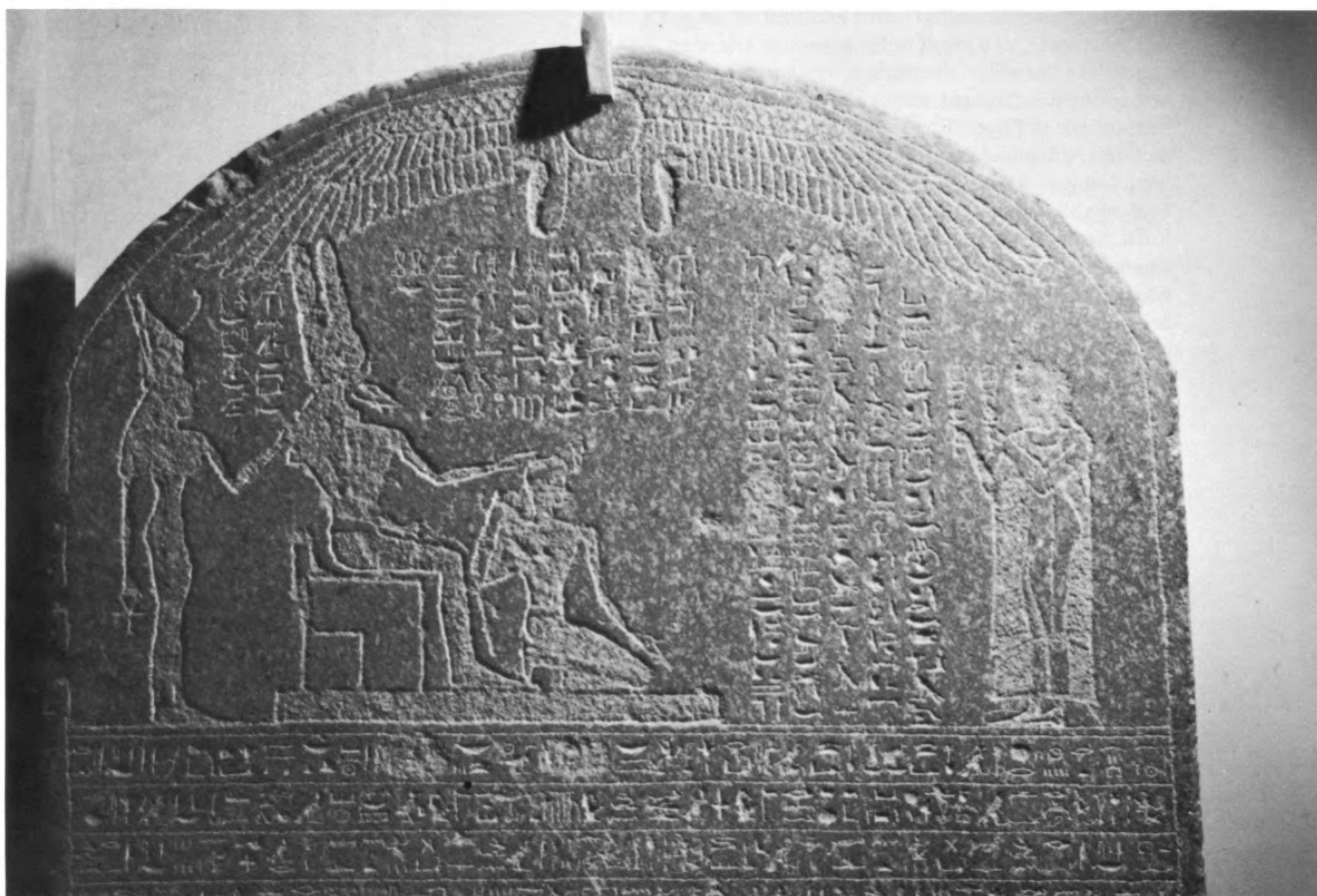
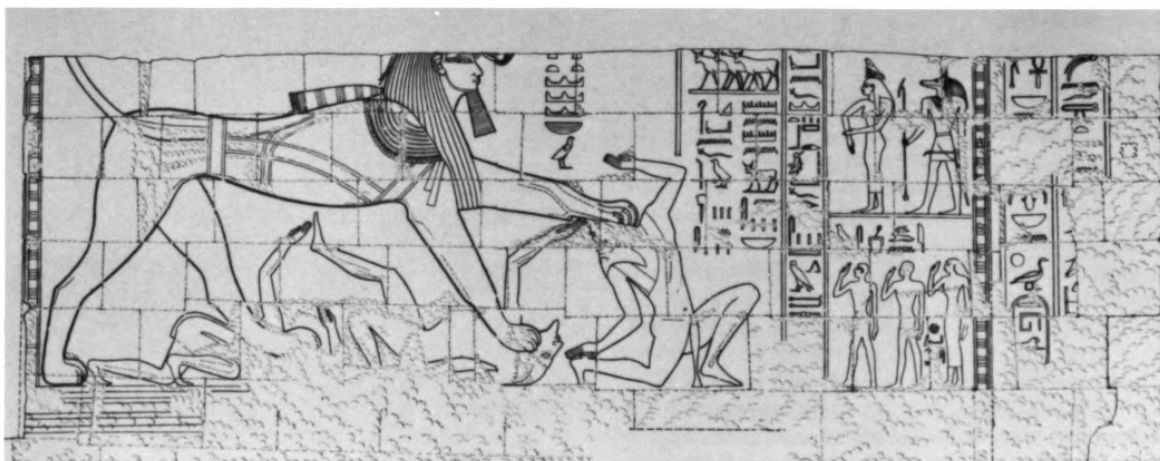


Fig. 57. Detail of the so-called coronation stela of King Aspelta (593-568 B.C.) from the Great Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal (Cairo JE 48866).

Fig. 58. King Taharqa (690-664 B.C.) as a sphinx trampling his enemies, from Temple T at Kawa (after Macadam 1955).





king considered himself to be the executor of the god's will. Moreover, as a result of the sovereign's need to appear as a "genuine" pharaoh, an exaggerated form of orthodoxy was flaunted, above all during the period of Kushite rule in Egypt (Fig. 58). This was facilitated by the fact that Amun had developed from a local god to a universal god already during the New Kingdom and had by then also taken on the particular role of the sun god. In Kush, we find only those characteristics of the god Amun which associate him with the monarchy. Whether or to what extent Amun was deeply rooted in the religious beliefs of the general population remains to be established.

The importance of the rest of the Egyptian pantheon diminishes significantly in Kush, although the places of worship of some of these deities continue to be used. Thus, Taharqo, for example, built a new temple at Semna for the deified King Sesostri III. Both Mut, Amun's consort, and the warlike lion-goddess Bastet appear to have played a role of some significance at this time. But only Osiris, Isis, and their son Horus increased in importance, as was also true in contemporary Egypt. Apart from the role which Osiris and Isis played in the cult of the dead, their importance was primarily a consequence of the parallels that could be drawn between the figures of Isis and Horus, on the one hand, and the king and his mother, on the other.

In the Butana, it is possible that even in Napatan times the cult of indigenous gods such as Apedemak, the lion-god, enjoyed some attention even on the part of the monarchy. This cannot yet be proved, and no traces of such worship have been found in the Nubian Nile Valley. The presence of local traditions is reflected only in burial customs, which, even in the case of the royal tombs, exhibit a tendency toward the blending of indigenous and Egyptian features (Cat. 112; Fig. 59). It will suffice to mention here only the custom of killing the king's horses at the death of their master and of burying them in the royal cemetery. There are also faint indications that some of the king's wives followed him into death. The possibility that such a practice existed requires further investigation.

*Fig. 59. Calcite vase of King Aspelta (593-568 B.C.) with flat-topped gold cap and carnelian, turquoise, and steatite suspensions (Cat. 112), Napatan Period (Boston 20.1070).*





Fritz Hintze

The second major period of the Kingdom of Kush is called the Meroitic Period. It spans the years from about 300 B.C. to about A.D. 350 and is characterized by several distinctive features.

Around 300 B.C. a series of decisive changes took place. Among these, the transfer of the royal cemetery from its traditional site near Napata to a site in the vicinity of the capital, Meroe, should be mentioned first because of its great historical significance, although further research is required to explain the circumstances that underlay this event. Following this transfer, the Meroites turned their political interests more to the southern part of the kingdom, particularly to the region of the "Island of Meroe," known today as the Butana. As a result of this turn, Meroitic elements entered the markedly Egyptianized official culture of the state and court, in other words, of the ruling class. On the basis of our present knowledge, we are unable to determine whether or not any fundamental changes in social structure took place in early Meroitic times which would distinguish this period from the Napatan Period. The role of the ruling family, together with the transmission of offices through the maternal line, becomes clearly visible only at a later date, above all in Lower Nubia. That these phenomena appear at a later date, however, may be due merely to the fact that there are more later sources available to us.

With regard to agriculture, cattle breeding becomes increasingly important. Excavations in the city of Meroe have shown that small animals, such as sheep and goats, were gradually replaced by cattle as the basis of nourishment. The many representations of cattle, for example those in the Temple of Apedemak at Musawwarat es-Sufra (Fig. 60), picture a powerful and well-cared-for breed such as permits us to surmise that a form of actual cattle breeding had taken the place of mere cattle herding. The animals are pictured wearing wide necklaces, probably made of leather, from which bells are hung. They evidently enjoyed great prestige and must have played an important role in the temple cult.

It can scarcely be doubted that the Meroites were familiar with the art of taming African elephants and that they used these animals in military campaigns (Fig. 61). Whether or not this custom can be traced back to the Ptolemies and therefore indirectly to Indian influence is a matter of debate. The elephant had great significance in Meroe, particularly in Musawwarat es-Sufra, where it was frequently represented in relief and sculpture. It was also featured as an architectural element in temple design, sculptured elephants functioning as column bases (Vol. II, Fig. 38). That the elephant played a part in cult ceremonies is clear, but the origin of this role and its

significance are still largely unknown. In any event, we see here an important Meroitic characteristic that did not appear until after 300 B.C.

To cope with the special climatic conditions of the area, an extensive system of reservoirs (*hafirs*) was developed to facilitate both cattle herding and, to a certain extent, the cultivation of fields away from the Nile Valley in the Butana. These basin-shaped *hafirs* were constructed by excavating the earth and piling it up in an almost circular embankment with an intake, so that during the seasonal rains the waters could stream into the reservoir from the greatest possible drainage area. Some of the *hafirs* were quite large and certainly required the organization of a considerable number of workers for their construction and maintenance. The large *hafir* of Musawwarat es-Sufra, for example, has a diameter of about 250 meters and a depth at the center of about 15 meters. During its construction, approximately 250,000 cubic meters of earth were raised (Fig. 62).

The vicinity of Meroe was suited to iron production. Iron ore in the form of an iron-rich sandstone was abundant, and there was evidently sufficient wood available during the Meroitic Period to keep the forges operating. Iron production on a large scale may go as far back as early Meroitic times. Implements made of iron may have been employed in agriculture, and iron tools were certainly used in the quarries and in construction, for many chisels of widely varying shapes have been found. Iron nails as well as fittings for doors and chests also occur; and weapons, too, were made of iron, particularly spearheads and swords, although traditional bronze and carnelian were still used to fashion arrowheads.

Minor arts, especially the art of the goldsmith, continued to develop and reached a high level of achievement (Cats. 163-188; Figs. 63,64). In ceramics, however, a significant change took place at the beginning of the Meroitic Period: typical Napatan (bright red) ceramics disappeared completely. In their place, there appeared in royal burials at Meroe at about 300 B.C. a new black polished ware which can be regarded as typical of the Meroitic south.

The Kingdom of Kush participated only indirectly in the great world trade that developed in Egypt during Ptolemaic times. International trade did not pass through Meroe, which lay to the side of the two main trade routes connecting Egypt with the Far East: the overland route that traversed Arabia, and the overseas route, increasingly used in later times, that led across the Red Sea. However, direct trade with Meroe was important for Egypt, and so was the trade with central African states

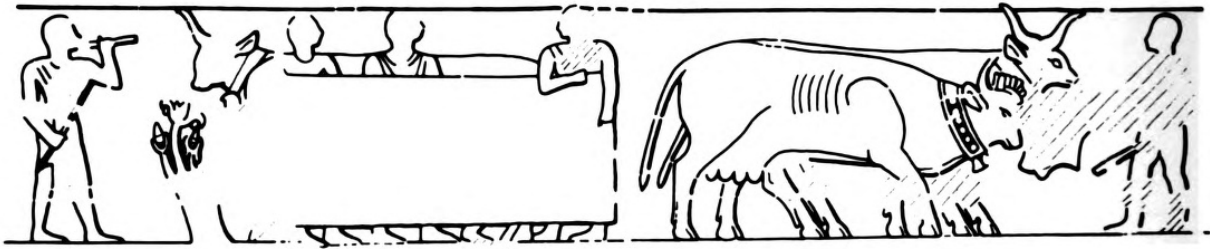


Fig. 60. Drawing of relief scene of cattle, from the inner north wall of the Apedemak Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra, Meroitic Period, 235-218 B.C.

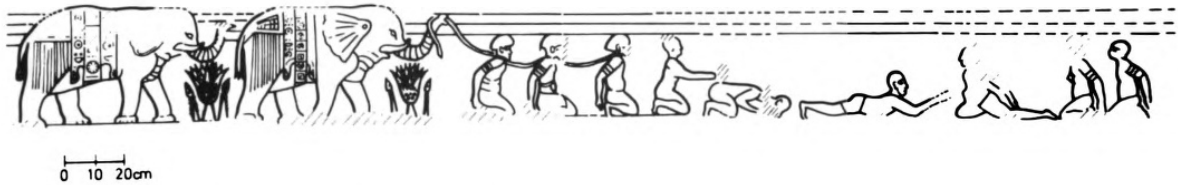


Fig. 61. Drawing of relief scene of elephants leading bound prisoners, from the outer west wall of the Apedemak Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra, Meroitic Period, 235-218 B.C.

Fig. 62. View of the reservoir (hafir) at Musawwarat es-Sufra, Meroitic Period, probably third century B.C.

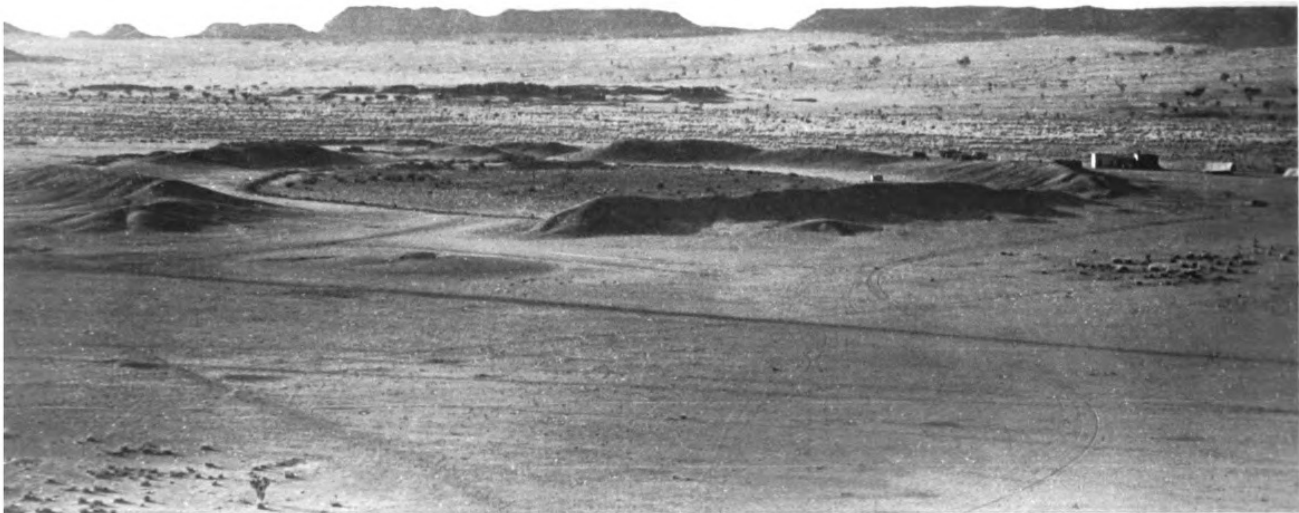






Fig. 63. Gold ornament in the form of a canine animal and uraeus (Cat. 174), Meroitic Period, late first century B.C. (Munich Ant. 2497).

Fig. 64. Gold hinged armlet with winged goddess (Cat. 169), Meroitic Period, late first century B.C. (Munich Ant. 2495a).



Fig. 65. Triple-protome with ram and lions (Cat. 145), from the Apedemak Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra, Meroitic Period, late third to second century B.C. (Berlin/DDR 24300).







Fig. 66. The Great Enclosure at Musawwarat es-Sufra; the major period of construction began after 300 B.C.

that passed through Meroe en route to Egypt. Meroe exported to Egypt gold, iron, ivory, ostrich feathers, and other products of the African interior; it also provided Egypt with slaves.

Independent Meroitic features are evident in the architecture of the time (Cat. 145; Fig. 65). The major period for the construction of Musawwarat es-Sufra began after 300 B.C. with the erection of temples on artificial terraces within the Great Enclosure. This construction, already occupied in the Napatan Period, constituted the nucleus of an important center for pilgrims who came to celebrate the periodic festivals held there for local gods. The complicated ground plan of this extensive complex of buildings is without parallel in the entire Nile Valley (Fig. 66; Vol. II, Fig. 51), and the nearly 800-year-long building history of the Great Enclosure, with its manifold revisions and expansions, clearly shows the preeminent significance of this sacred pilgrimage center. Characteristic of the Great Enclosure are its many one-room temples dedicated to native gods, especially to the lion-headed Apedemak and to the human-headed Sebiumeker. The ground plans of these temples follow the golden section principle.

The development of writing is characteristic of the inventiveness of the time. The Meroitic script has a cursive (Cat. 120) and a more rarely used hieroglyphic form (Fig. 67). Although the individual characters are derived from Egyptian demotic script and hieroglyphs, respectively, the Meroitic system of writing differs fundamentally from that of the Egyptians. The numerous Egyptian multi-consonantal signs, word-symbols, and determinatives have no place in Meroitic writing. The complicated Egyptian system was reduced to a simple alphabet consisting of twenty-three symbols. In contrast to Egyptian script and, indeed, to most Semitic systems of writing, Meroitic script includes vowel notations.

		a			i
		e			h
		i			h
		o			š (s)
		y			s (se)
		w			k
		b			q
		p			t
		m			te
		n			to
		ñ (ne)			d
		r			word divider

Fig. 67. The hieroglyphic and cursive forms of the Meroitic script with their phonetic values.

Although it has been argued that Meroitic writing imitated a Greek model, it is precisely in its method of vowel notation that Meroitic differs fundamentally from Greek. Meroitic script is a syllabic system, in which every symbol represents a consonant plus the vowel *a*, except when followed by another symbol indicating the vowel *i*, *o*, or *e*. A symbol for the vowel *a* itself appears only at the beginning of a word. For the syllables *ne*, *se*, *te*, and *to*, there are separate symbols. If a consonant lacks a vowel altogether, this lack is represented by an *e*; the sign *e* therefore has a dual usage. In its use of a symbol to separate words, Meroitic script is not only distinguished from but superior to the Greek. The Meroitic system of writing is strikingly similar to the old Persian cuneiform script, both in its manner of notating vowels and in its method of word separation. We do not know whether these similarities are merely coincidental.

From the second century B.C. on, the Meroitic language, which had formerly been only a spoken tongue in Kush, was employed almost exclusively as the written language as well. Since there are, unfortunately, no bilingual inscriptions to provide us with access to Meroitic, we understand very little of the language. We have been able to read the Meroitic script without difficulty ever since it was first deciphered by F.L.I. Griffith (1911a), but we do not know the meaning of what we read, except in the case of a very few words and phrases. As a result, the numerous Meroitic inscriptions in our possession can be used only to a limited extent in making historical interpretations. Meroitic is not a Hamito-Semitic ("Afro-Asiatic") language and therefore is not related to Old Egyptian. Various attempts have been made to link Meroitic with one of the other well-known groups of African languages, for if such kinship could be proved it would be of significant aid in decoding the ancient language. Unfortunately, these efforts have not yet produced acceptable results.

The history of the Meroitic Period of the Kingdom of Kush can be divided into the following main stages: A transitional stage (from 310 to 270 B.C.) between the Napatan Period and the Meroitic Period is followed by the early Meroitic Period (from 270 to 90 B.C.); the middle Meroitic Period (from 90 B.C. to the threshold of the Christian Era); and the late Meroitic Period (from the threshold of the Christian Era to approximately A.D. 350).

#### THE TRANSITIONAL STAGE

King Nastasen (335-315 B.C., Gen 27) was the last ruler to be buried at Nuri. After his interment, the royal cemetery was transferred to the opposite bank of the Nile, at Gebel Barkal, which the Egyptians as well as the Kushites called "the Holy Mountain," and at the foot of which lay the Great Temple of Amun. For at least three generations, the royal cemetery remained at Gebel Barkal, in the vicinity of the Great Temple. Although royal pyramids (Bar. 11, 14, 15) that are definitely of this period have been located there, inscriptions of several

rulers dating from approximately the same time have also been found at Kawa. These inscriptions are poorly preserved, however, and therefore largely incomprehensible. Nevertheless, we do know that they refer to temple construction and bequests for sacrifices.

The rulers who were interred in the pyramid group at Gebel Barkal were previously classified by scholars as belonging to a "First Meroitic Co-Dynasty in Napata." It was assumed that the Kingdom of Kush was at this time divided into a northern (Napatan) territory with its capital at Napata and a southern (Meroitic) territory with its capital at Meroe. Macadam (in Dunham 1957) was the first to oppose this view, which dates back to Reisner (1923d). Macadam's belief that a First Meroitic Co-Dynasty in Napata did not exist but that the rulers buried at Gebel Barkal are to be placed within the main line of the kings of Kush is gradually beginning to gain general acceptance.

We should probably consider the era of these early rulers to be a period of transition between the Napatan and the Meroitic Periods in the history of Kush; for, in spite of the paucity of materials available to us, a few distinctive features indicating a time of transition are clearly discernible. Among these features is a greater emphasis upon Amun of Napata as a traditional state god. In addition, there is an unmistakable imitation of the Egyptian Ramesside Period, during which the theocracy of Amun had indeed played a special role in Upper Egypt. The throne names of the kings, which frequently express a political program, were modeled upon those of Ramesside rulers, or made reference to Napata. Thus Sabrakamani (Gen. 32), for example, calls himself "the one who (as king) has appeared in Napata," as did Piye (Gen. 2) and Harsiyotef (Gen. 23) before him. The designation "Son of Amun" is used instead of the usual royal title "Son of Ra." In their cartouches, all the rulers of this period add to their own names the epithet "Beloved of Amun." The festive garments of Aryamani (Gen. 29), as represented on his stela from Temple A at Kawa (Copenhagen NCG 1708), are very reminiscent of the royal robes of the Ramesside Period. Therefore, Macadam (1955, 21) called this transitional time the "Neo-Ramesside Period."

We are probably correct in assuming a common cause for the striking return to Ramesside traditions, the increased importance of the god Amun, and the transfer of the royal cemetery to the immediate vicinity of the Great Temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal (Temple B 500). This cause was the increased influence of the Amun priesthood, whose power base was probably the oracle.

#### THE EARLY MEROITIC PERIOD (270-90 B.C.)

The phase during which the influence of the priests of Amun was ostensibly strengthened came to an end with an important and decisive event: the transfer of the royal cemetery southward to the capital, Meroe, which already in the Napatan Period had been the place of residence of



the Meroitic rulers (see p. 77). A report handed down by the Greek historian Diodorus (3.6) is of significance in this regard:

Now in former times the kings [of Kush] would obey the priests, having been overcome, not by arms nor by force, but because their reasoning powers had been put under a constraint by their very superstition; but during the reign of the second Ptolemy the king of the Ethiopians, Ergamenes, who had had a Greek education and had studied philosophy, was the first to have the courage to disdain the command. For assuming a spirit which became the position of a king he entered with his soldiers into the unapproachable place where stood, as it turned out, the golden shrine of the Ethiopians, put the priests to the sword, and after abolishing this custom thereafter ordered affairs after his own will.

Diodorus lived approximately two hundred years after this event. In writing his history, however, he was able to draw upon many Greek and Roman sources now lost to us. The credibility of his report has often been placed in doubt, and we do not know, of course, whether or not this coup d'état of Ergamenes actually began with the murder of all the priests of Amun. Nevertheless, the nucleus of this report, namely, that a Meroitic king had rebelled against the primacy of the priests of Amun at the time of Ptolemy II (283-246 B.C.) and that this event had consequences for the period to follow, accords remarkably well with fundamental changes which, as can be shown, actually occurred around 300 B.C. The essence of the report of Diodorus therefore seems to correspond quite well with historical reality.

The name of the first king to have his pyramid erected near Meroe (Beg. S. 6) is usually read Arkakamani, (Gen. 33), but the reading Arkamani-qo is also quite possible. In any event, his name is similar to or even identical with the name Ergamenes, which was recorded by Diodorus in its Greek form. According to current knowledge of Meroitic chronology, we can assume that the approximate reign of the king buried in Beg. S. 6 was between 270 and 260 B.C. Thus, he was probably a contemporary of Ptolemy II and is therefore here called Ergamenes I.

It is perhaps not to be regarded as coincidental that the first three rulers of the Meroitic Period assumed throne names modeled upon those of the rulers of the Egyptian Dynasty XXVI, a practice that contrasts sharply with the custom of their predecessors, who modeled their throne names on those of Ramesside kings. This change may well have some connection with the fact that the rulers of Dynasty XXVI had been able to subdue Thebes, the center of the theocracy of Amun in Egypt.

In Meroe, two large cemeteries had been in use for members of the royal family and high officials ever since the time of Aspelta (593-568 B.C., Gen. 10): the so-called West Cemetery, located on the wide plain between the city and the mountains of the east, and the South Cemetery,

which is located at the edge of the mountains.

Arkamani-qo and his successor, Amanislo (Gen. 34), built their pyramids in the South Cemetery. With these constructions, the South Cemetery was filled to capacity. Therefore, the so-called North Cemetery was opened by Aman . . . tekha (before 235 B.C., Gen. 35) on a rocky ridge adjacent to the South Cemetery, and it remained the burial site for Meroitic kings into the fourth century A.D. — except for one interruption, to which we will return later.

The second pyramid built in the North Cemetery belonged to Grave Beg. N. 53; this pyramid was later torn down for reasons unknown to us and replaced by Pyramid Beg. N. 6 of Queen Amanishakheto (end of first century B.C.). Grave Beg. N. 53 is apparently that of King Arnekhamani (235-218 B.C., Gen. 36), in whose reign the Temple of Apedemak was built at Musawwarat es-Sufra (Fig. 68).

Arnekhamani included, in clear imitation of contemporary Ptolemaic models in Egypt, the epithets "Beloved of Isis" and "Eternally Living" in his cartouche. Since Ptolemy IV (222-204 B.C.) was the first of the Ptolemies to use this epithet, we can conclude that the two rulers were more or less contemporaries. Arnekhamani's inscriptions found in the Temple of Apedemak at Musawwarat es-Sufra were written in an early Ptolemaic (Egyptian) language; their orthography is early Ptolemaic, and their content is strongly influenced by the temple inscriptions at Philae. On the other hand, in spite of an obvious imitation of contemporary Egyptian characteristics, the reliefs at Musawwarat es-Sufra are specifically Meroitic in subject matter. The king is shown in Meroitic dress. His robes, insignia, and rich ornaments are no longer patterned upon an Egyptian model. The wide sash draped across the shoulder, the flowing robe

Fig. 68. The Apedemak Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra, Meroitic Period, 235-218 B.C.

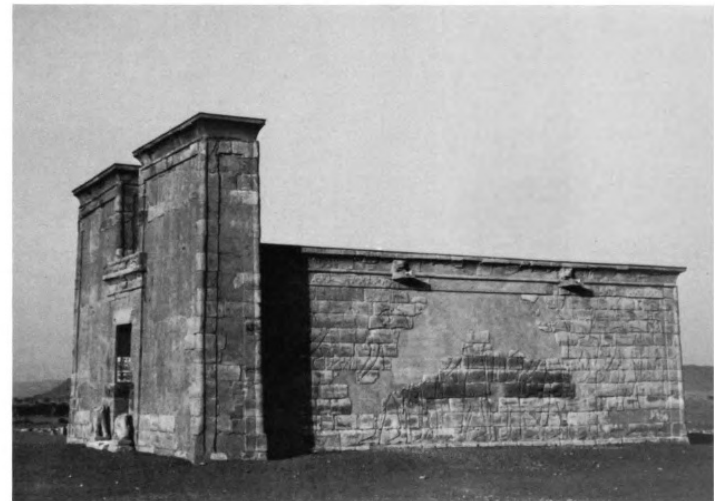




Fig. 69. Drawing of King Arnekhamani (235-218 B.C.), from the outside south wall of the Apedemak Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra.

decorated with fringes, and the scepter are not Egyptian but Meroitic (Fig. 69; Cats. 135, 137). The principal gods of this temple are also Meroitic gods: the lion-headed Apedemak, a war god and protective deity (Fig. 70; Cat. 121), and the human-headed Sebiameker, a god of peace and of creation.

Under Arnekhamani's son (?) and successor, Arqamani (Ergamenes II, 218-200 B.C., Gen. 37), who was buried in Pyramid Beg. N. 7, good relations with Ptolemaic Egypt evidently persisted. Arqamani joined with Ptolemy IV in building temples in Philae and in the Twelve-Mile Strip (Dodekashoinos). At Philae, blocks belonging to Ergamenes II form part of the southern enclosure of the Temple of Arensnuphis built by Ptolemy IV; at Dakka, a chapel begun by Ergamenes II was extended by Ptolemy IV, and blocks bearing his name were also found at Kalabsha.

The reliefs and inscriptions of these constructions in Lower Nubia are completely Egyptian in style. King Adikhalamani (200-190 B.C., Gen. 38), who was probably the successor of Ergamenes II, caused a chapel of Isis to be erected at Dabod. In one of its inscriptions, he terms himself "Beloved of Apedemak."

The territory just referred to as the Dodekashoinos extended 120 kilometers south from Syene (Aswan) to Hieria Sycaminos (Maharraqa). It had been subject to Egyptian administration since at least the sixth century B.C. and was joined to what was then Egypt's southernmost province as a border zone. Philae, with its cult of Isis, was the religious center of this territory. The Twelve-Mile Strip had great commercial importance, for it guarded the access to the important gold mines of Wadi el Allaqi in the Eastern Desert. The fact that Meroitic rulers undertook building programs in this border area can only be interpreted as an expression of the markedly friendly relations that existed between the Meroites and the Ptolemies.

These friendly relations, however, suffered a serious decline under Ptolemy V (205-180 B.C.). This king had been compelled to put down rebellions in Upper Egypt until the twenty-first year of his reign, and it is altogether possible that the rebels were supported by the Meroites. In any event, Ptolemy V, after suppressing these rebellions, planned a campaign against Kush, although his undertaking never came to fruition. The various names of Ergamenes II inscribed at Philae were nevertheless chiseled away in accordance with a common practice in Egypt, and ultimately the Ptolemaic sphere of influence was extended past the Twelve-Mile Strip into a region called the Thirty-Mile Strip (Triakontashoinos) and reached the northern end of the Second Cataract.

Ptolemy VI (180-145 B.C.) established permanent settlements near Dakka and probably also near Buhen. Ptolemy VIII (145-116 B.C.) embarked upon intensive construction projects at Kalabsha. The name of Queen Shanakdakhete (170-150 B.C., Gen. 41, buried in Pyramid Beg. N. 11) appears in Meroitic hieroglyphs on a temple



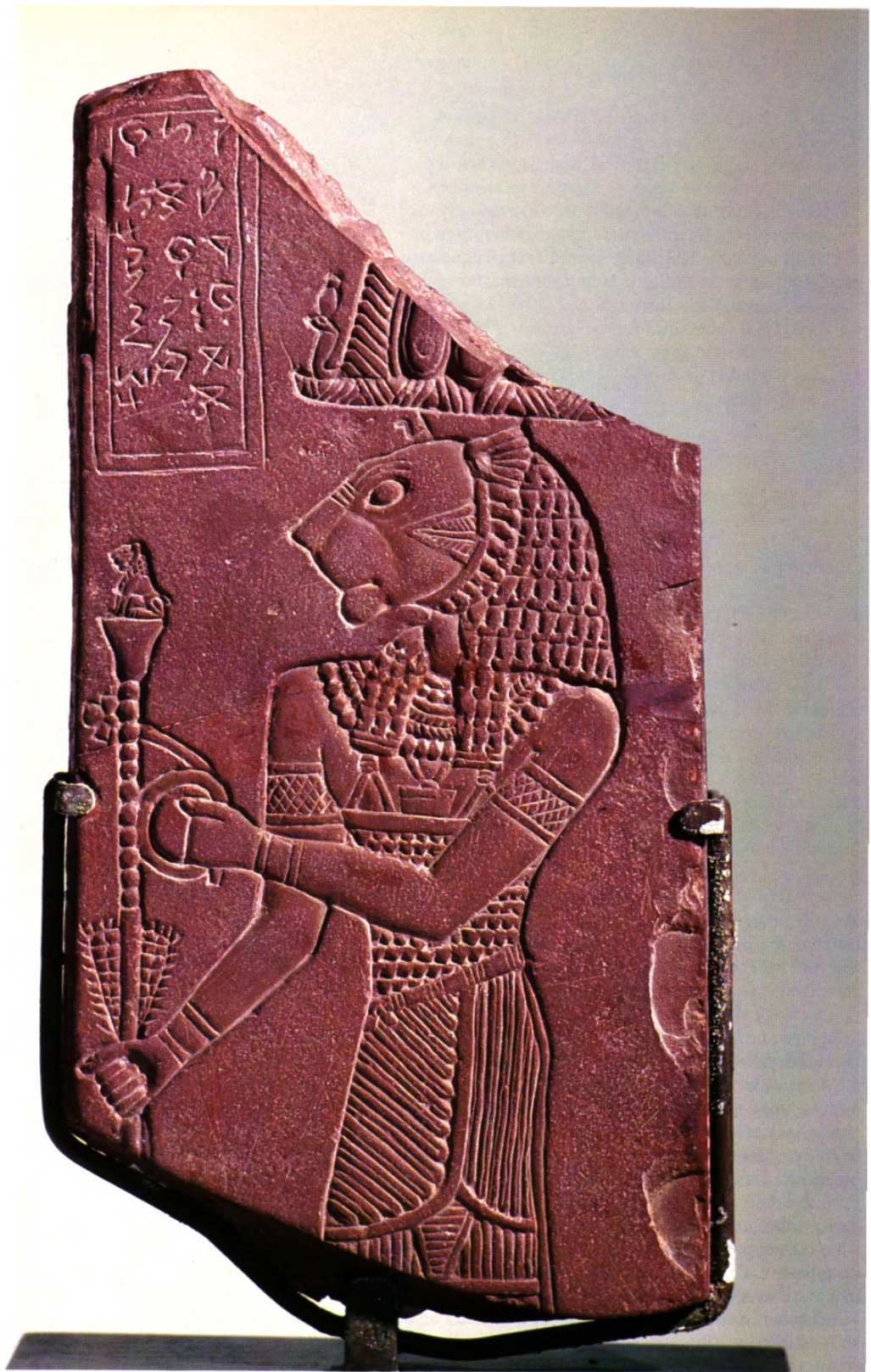


Fig. 70. Votive tablet (Cat. 121) of King Tanyidamani (110-90 B.C.) with a representation of Apedemak, Meroitic Period, about 100 B.C. (Baltimore 22.258).



she had built at Naqa (Temple F). This is the earliest Meroitic script that can be dated with relative certainty. In her tomb, fragments of pottery were found bearing demotic (Egyptian) and cursive Meroitic inscriptions. Henceforth, Meroitic hieroglyphs were increasingly used and soon replaced Egyptian writing altogether, even in official inscriptions. The oldest *datable* text of significant length written in the Meroitic language stems, however, from the reign of King Tanyidamani (110-90 B.C., Gen. 44). This text is found on a stela (Boston 23.736; Fig. 71), which was erected in Temple B 500 at Gebel Barkal and contains a detailed government report as well as a list of temple endowments.

THE MIDDLE MEROITIC PERIOD  
(90 B.C. TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA)

The first century B.C. can in many ways be regarded as a golden age; it was the time when the Meroitic kingdom attained the height of its power. The strong concentration of reigning queens in this period is striking. All these ruling queens bear, in addition to the sovereign title *qore* (ruler), the title of *kandake*, "queen mother," which probably gave rise to the Greek view that Kush had always been ruled by queens named Kandake.

Increasing Meroitic activity in Lower Nubia is evident at this time. It was such activity that finally led to a military confrontation with the Romans, the new rulers of Egypt. Since the end of the New Kingdom, particularly after Dynasty XX, Lower Nubia had been largely uninhabited. Although there are no traces of Egyptian or Meroitic building activity, settlements, or graves dating from this time, it is possible that such important political and military centers as Qasr Ibrim and Faras had continued to be permanently occupied. Lower Nubia as a rule now served only as a corridor for soldiers, mercenaries, prisoners, tributaries, civil servants, envoys, and traders. Ptolemaic and Meroitic construction was limited entirely to the Dodekashoinos.

Ecological changes were probably responsible for bringing about the depopulation of Lower Nubia. Diminished rainfall had caused a steady decrease in the flood waters of the Nile, on which the riverine populations depended for their livelihood. In Lower Nubia, lack of water made the irrigation of high-lying fields ever more difficult and therefore unprofitable, especially since irrigation was implemented only by such primitive devices as the age-old *shaduf*. With a decline in agricultural production, the economic foundation upon which larger populations and settlements could exist also disappeared. Only new developments in the technology of irrigation were to bring about a reversal of this decline.

There is some evidence that the Meroites once again showed increased interest in Lower Nubia in the first century B.C. There was probably a gradual migration south of the Dodekashoinos, beginning with small groups of people, who resettled in the area that had been almost uninhabited for so long. Near Dakka, at Gebel



Fig. 71. Detail of a large stela showing King Tanyidamani (110-90 B.C.) in bold raised relief, standing upon an enemy between two representations of Amun (Boston 23.736).

Abu Dirwa, in the southern part of the Dodekashoinos, cursive Meroitic inscriptions reveal the archaic forms of writing that are dated to that period. A few ostraca and two offering tables found in the cemetery of Faras can also be dated in the first half of the first century A.D. One of these offering tables (Faras 43, London BM 1576) belonged to a man who bore the high rank of *pesato*, which is generally translated as "viceroy" and probably signified the highest ranking Meroitic administrator in Lower Nubia. This offering table is the earliest evidence of the Meroitic title of viceroy. What is more important, it reveals that an administration actually existed and this, in turn, presupposes the presence of a relatively large number of persons living in Lower Nubia.

A small group of pyramids at Gebel Barkal can also be dated to the first century B.C. (Fig. 72). The rulers buried in these pyramids were long considered to





Fig. 72. Pyramids at Gebel Barkal, Meroitic Period, first century B.C.

represent a "Second Meroitic Co-Dynasty of Napata." In other words, it was supposed that the Kingdom of Kush was once again divided into two parts, but we are now inclined to favor the view that this group of kings is to be included within the main line of the kings of Kush. It therefore follows that there was a second transferal of the royal cemetery from Meroe to Gebel Barkal, this time for a period of three or four generations. This shift is probably connected with the increasing political activity of the Meroites in the north. By transferring the royal cemetery to Gebel Barkal, the Meroites doubtless hoped to gain the political support of the priests of Amun, who were still influential there. Unfortunately, only one name has been found in the relevant pyramids at Gebel Barkal, that of Queen Nawidemak (Gen. 47, Bar. 6). A gold statuette discovered at Gebel Barkal (Cat. 137) probably also belonged to this queen, who was presumably the mother of King Amanikhabale

(Gen. 48). This king himself, however, was buried at Meroe.

Meroitic cursive inscriptions dating from the second half of the first century bearing the names of King Teriteqas (Gen. 49), of Qore and Kandake Amanirenas (Gen. 50), and of the Viceroy of Lower Nubia Akinidad (Gen. 51) have been found in the Dodekashoinos at the Temple of Dakka (Pselchis). In all likelihood, these inscriptions are in some way connected with the military events that took place during the first years of Roman rule, which in 30 B.C. had supplanted the reign of the Ptolemies in Egypt.

In the year 28 B.C., after the Romans under Octavian (later Caesar Augustus, 27 B.C.-A.D. 14) had completely subjugated Lower Egypt, Cornelius Gallus, the first Roman prefect in Egypt, succeeded in conquering Upper Egypt as far as Aswan. He met with the envoys of the Meroitic king on the Island of Philae but did not dare to advance southward. Although the Thirty-Mile Strip was

left to the Meroites, it was nevertheless declared a Roman protectorate, which thus secured Roman access to the gold mines of Wadi el Allaqi. After the suicide of his predecessor in the year 26/25 B.C., Aelius Gallus, the second Roman prefect, was given the special mission of conquering Arabia and "Ethiopia" (that is, the Kingdom of Kush), in order to bring the trade routes from India and central Africa under Roman control. But while the prefect was carrying out the first of these missions, a military campaign against Arabia in 25 B.C., the Meroites advanced northward and conquered Philae, Aswan, and Elephantine in the year 24 B.C. They defeated the three Roman cohorts stationed in this district, plundered Aswan, and carried off the statues of Augustus that had been placed there. A bronze head of Augustus (London BM 1911.9-1.1; Fig. 73), found in Meroe, is generally regarded as booty taken during this campaign.

Nevertheless, the Meroites were driven out of Aswan in the same year by C. Petronius, who now held the office of Roman prefect in Egypt. According to a detailed report made by the Greek geographer Strabo (17. 53-54), the Roman troops advanced far to the south and finally reached Napata. Although they withdrew again to the north, they left behind a garrison in Qasr Ibrim (Primis), where the southern border of the Roman Empire now lay. When the Meroites made a renewed attempt to seize Primis, Petronius was able to forestall their efforts. Following this event, negotiations were begun between the Romans and the Meroites. The latter sent mediators to Augustus, who was then in Samos, and in the year 21/20 B.C. a peace treaty was concluded which was strikingly favorable to the Meroites: the southern part of the Thirty-Mile Strip, including Primis, was evacuated by the Romans, and the Meroites were exempted from having to pay tribute. On the other hand, the Romans continued to occupy the Dodekashoinos as a military border zone, so the frontier now lay near Hiere Sycaminos (Maharraqa). This arrangement continued until the end of the third century A.D., the relations between Meroe and Roman Egypt remaining generally peaceful during this time. Only the Emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68) in around A.D. 64 planned a campaign against Meroe, but his plans were never executed. In order to reconnoiter the land, Nero had sent out two expeditions "to investigate the sources of the Nile"; extracts from their reports have been preserved by Seneca (*Nat. Quaest.* 6. 8. 3) and Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 6. 29; see also Hintze 1959, 28).

The *kandake* against whom Petronius was compelled to fight is generally assumed to have been Queen Amanirenas. She and Prince Akinidad left behind in Meroe two large stelae bearing Meroitic inscriptions, one of which is now in London (BM 1550). They also left some inscriptions at Dakka, as mentioned above. Another stela bearing Akinidad's name was recently excavated at Qasr Ibrim (London BM xxxxx). It names Akinidad together with Queen Amanishakheto (Gen. 52), who was probably the successor of Amanirenas.

Although we are unable to comprehend the content of these inscriptions in detail, their existence nevertheless provides us with new evidence to prove that Prince Akinidad was intimately connected with Lower Nubia. He is the only person known to have borne simultaneously the two high titles of *paqor*, "prince," and *pesato*, "viceroys (of Lower Nubia)."

THE LATE MEROITIC PERIOD  
(FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO  
APPROXIMATELY A.D. 320)

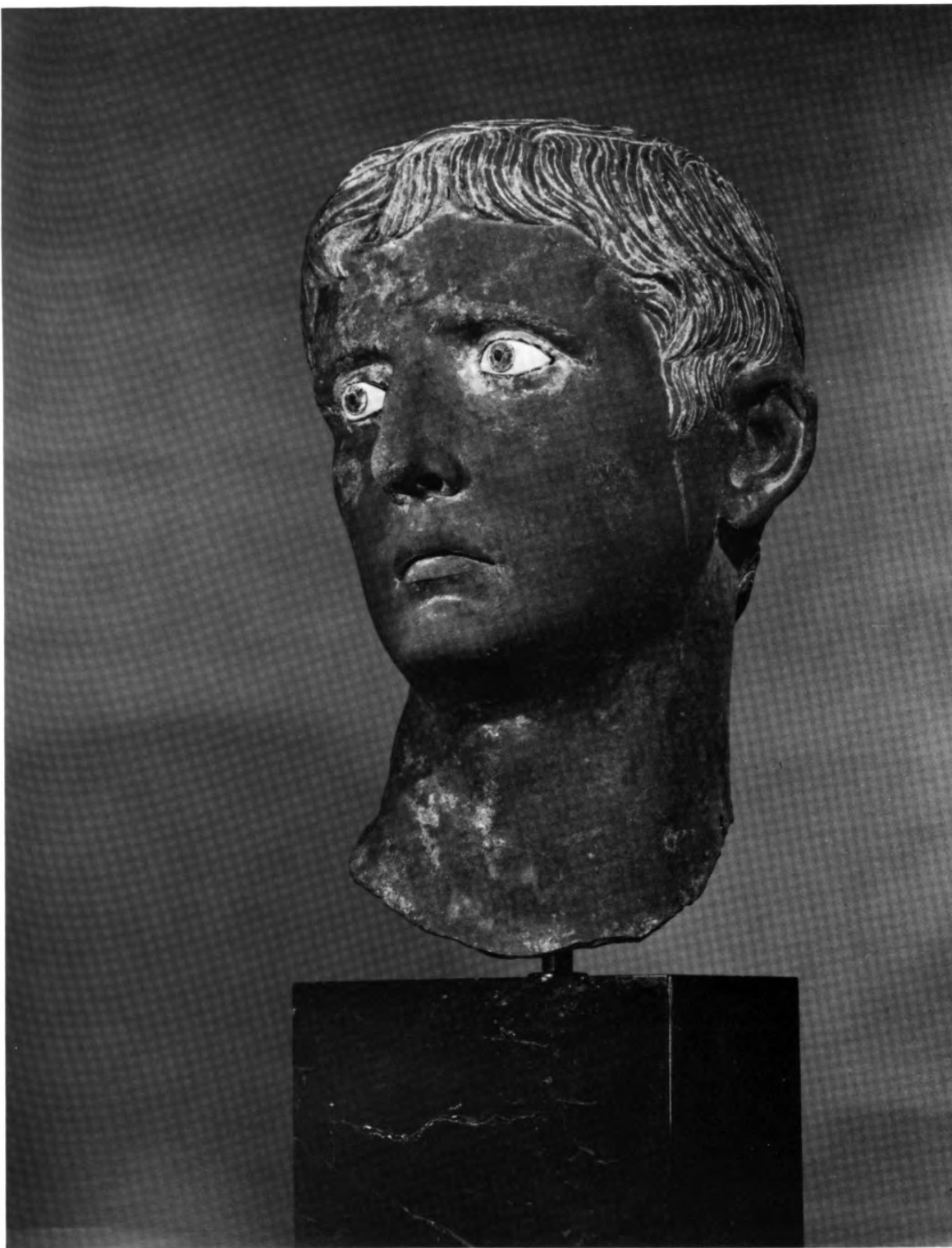
The late Meroitic Period lasted approximately three and one half centuries and began with King Natakamani (0-A.D. 20, Gen 53, Beg. N. 22), who was probably the successor of Queen Amanishakheto. Very few decisive changes are observable within this period itself. On the basis of their archaeological characteristics, we are quite familiar with the sequential order of the kings' pyramids, which provide us with what information we have concerning the relative chronology of the period. Unfortunately, however, there are very few dates of absolute certainty.

Natakamani introduced a new, smaller-size pyramid as well as a new kind of chapel decoration, and both of his innovations became models for the entire period. His reign saw radical changes also in other areas, especially in the realm of art (Wenig 1964; 1973a). It is particularly striking that Natakamani once again employed Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, in addition to Meroitic script. During his reign, many state-sponsored building projects were undertaken. New temples or extensive renovations of already existing temples, which were carried out in Natakamani's name, have been identified as Naqa (Vol. II, Figs. 49-50), Wad Ban Naqa, Meroe, Napata, Tebo, and Amara. A stand for the sacred bark which the king bequeathed or donated to the Temple of Isis in Wad Ban Naqa (Berlin/DDR 7261; Fig. 74) contains his name and that of Kandake Amanitore in Egyptian and also in Meroitic hieroglyphs. This "bilingual" inscription has served as a point of departure for the decipherment of Meroitic script.

Shorkaror (Gen. 54), a son of Natakamani, left behind a monument at Gebel Qeili which is noteworthy both for the history of art and for the history of cultural development. This monument, a representation of victory carved into the granite cliffs (Vol. II, Fig. 58), shows the god Helios, depicted in the Hellenistic manner, presenting a bundle of durra to the king. This is the oldest representation of durra known to us.

Given the sparsity of surviving monuments, we are forced to conclude that the summit of power achieved by Natakamani could not be maintained in the period that followed his reign. Under his successors, there were neither extensive building programs nor much activity in foreign policy. We know almost nothing about the historical events of his era, which is generally regarded as marking the decline and fall of the Meroitic kingdom. So





*Fig. 73. Bronze head of the Roman Emperor Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14), found at Meroe (London 1911.9-1.1).*

far as we can tell from the excavations of the city of Meroe, no fundamental changes took place in the lives of the inhabitants of the capital. There is no evidence, however, of impoverishment. The golden age for house architecture, ceramics, and arts and crafts in general seems still far from over (Cat. 132; Fig. 75), and the iron production on which the prosperity of Meroe was largely dependent increased rather than diminished.

#### LOWER NUBIA IN THE LATE MEROITIC PERIOD

After the treaty with Augustus established the northern border of the Meroitic kingdom near Hierakonpolis (Maharraqa), settlement of Lower Nubia intensified, and this led to a noticeable rise in the economic prosperity of the region. Heavily populated settlements were supported and perhaps actually made possible by the introduction of the water wheel (*sakia*), which facilitated the irrigation even of high-lying fields and thus significantly improved agricultural production. Numerous villages and cities were founded, in which spacious, abundantly furnished houses attest to the fact that the general population enjoyed considerable prosperity. Minor arts, particularly ceramic art, came into full bloom, clearly revealing Graeco-Roman influences from the north.

The population of this newly settled area was certainly not homogeneous. We are not yet able to draw satisfactory conclusions regarding the origin and ethnic composition of the settlers, but it is possible that they included a fairly substantial proportion of Nubian-speaking groups which had become "Meroiticized" to such a degree that they were eventually indistinguishable from the Meroitic upper classes - at least to judge from the material possessions they left behind. Such groups must therefore have lived in Meroitic territory for a long time before their arrival in the north, and had probably originally inhabited the area between Kerma and Dongola. While Meroitic was employed as the written language even in Lower Nubia, we also possess documents written in the Nubian language, the earliest of which date from the eighth century A.D. It may be noted, however, that the Greek-Coptic script used in Old Nubian contains several supplementary letters taken from the Meroitic alphabet, and this suggests some relationship between the two systems of writing.

The administration of Lower Nubia rested entirely in the hands of Meroitic officials. The highest official bore the title *pesato*, which is traditionally translated as "viceroy (of Lower Nubia)." His administrative seat was probably Faras. Subordinates of the viceroy are known from several sources. One high official was called *pelamos*, a title taken from Egyptian. *Pelamos*, meaning "general," probably signified the highest ranking military commander. Another frequently used title taken from Egyptian was *apote*, meaning "messenger" or "delegate," particularly of the king. Although many other official titles existed, their meaning is as yet unknown.



Fig. 74. Bark stand of King Natakamani (0-A.D. 20), from the Temple of Isis at Wad Ban Naqa, Meroitic Period (Berlin/DDR 7261).



The numerous priests were Meroites, but the highest priestly title was *annata*, a term derived from Egyptian. There are, however, many other priestly titles which are Meroitic. The most frequently mentioned groups are the priests of Amun and the priests of the god Amanapa, who was perhaps the Amun of Napata. Priests of the god Mash are also mentioned. The name of this god, who is known only in Lower Nubia, has been associated with the Nubian words *masha* or *masil*, which means "sun." It is striking that the priests of Isis are hardly ever mentioned. There is, moreover, only a single reference to the god Apedemak, whose importance in Meroe was very great. The one mention of a priest of this divinity is found on a stela from Arminna (Trigger 1970, 27).

Both temporal and sacred offices were held by members of a few great Meroitic families and inherited through the maternal line. Indeed, the entire administration appears to have rested in the hands of a relatively small number of Meroitic families, who possessed ancestral seats in a very limited number of localities. The masses of the people, however, seem to have been of non-Meroitic, perhaps Nubian, descent and had no share in the administration of the country.

How strong the ties were between the great families of priests and officials and their Meroitic homeland in the south remains a debatable point. However, it would be going too far to regard the Lower Nubian north, de facto, as an independent region. In their funerary inscriptions, the members of the great families of Lower Nubia place particular stress upon their relationship to high officials or priests in Napata and Meroe, especially to the *paqar* (prince). The latter resided exclusively in Meroe and was higher in rank than the *pesato* (viceroy). Moreover, Napata and Meroe are mentioned just as frequently in Lower Nubian grave inscriptions as are such Lower Nubian localities as Faras, Primis, or Akin.

We have no information regarding any special role played by the cult of the goddess Isis in Meroitic Lower Nubia. On the other hand, we possess considerable evidence for the importance of that cult on the Island of Philae, near Aswan. There, Egyptians, Romans, Nubians, Blemmyes, and Meroites joined in worshipping the goddess Isis, whose cult had become a world religion. Philae thus became an important meeting place for peoples and cultures, and numerous inscriptions left by pilgrims and legations provide a good idea of the significance of the cult. Several inscriptions of Meroitic pilgrims are composed in the Egyptian (demotic) language. These inscriptions clearly reveal that Meroitic participation in the cult of Isis on Philae was sponsored by the kings of Meroe. The following extract taken from one of these inscriptions may help to clarify this point:

The obeisance of Pasan . . . the *qoren-akrore* [Meroitic title for a court official] of the king, the great envoy of Rome, here before Isis of Philae . . . the great goddess . . . the mistress of the south, the north, the east, and the west, hearer of petitions of

them that are far off. Year 2, I came to Egypt having sung a song of triumph upon this desert, through the work of Isis, the great goddess, for she heard our prayers and brought us safe to Egypt. I came to Egypt and performed the judgments (?) which my master had commanded me . . . He commanded the king's son and the *qorens* of Isis to come to Egypt with me until we performed the festivals and the banquets which were held in the temple of Isis [and the] entire [cit]y . . . Pharmuthy day 1 [February 25], Abratoi the king's son came to Philae and we made holiday with him in the temple of Isis. He brought a vase of gold which Teqerideamani sent to the temple of Isis, amounting to 3½ pounds . . . Isis . . . my mistress . . . hearken thou unto us . . . my heart hangeth upon thee in Egypt, in Meroe, and in the deserts . . . Conduct us safe to Meroe the beautiful city of thy beloved son Teqerideamani, the king our master . . . Written in Year 3 of Autocrator Caesar Gaius Vibius Trebonianus Gallus . . . Pharmuthy day 15 [April 10, A.D. 253]."

As yet we know of no temple constructions in Lower Nubia authorized by Meroitic kings after Ergamenes II (Gen. 37) and Adikhalamani (Gen. 38). However, state-sponsored constructions seem to have been few during this period, even in the central Meroitic territories of the south. A statue of a lion bearing the name of Yesbokheamani (Gen. 74), written in Meroitic hieroglyphs and dating from the end of the Meroitic Period, was found at Qasr Ibrim. This same king also left two inscriptions at Philae, and may indeed have participated in a pilgrimage to that place. A large delegation of Meroitic dignitaries, who are represented in the so-called Meroitic Chamber at Philae, had been commissioned by one of the last of the Meroitic kings to travel to Philae bearing gifts for Isis. All of this demonstrates that the kings of Meroe had maintained their interest in Lower Nubia and asserted their rights there until the end of the Meroitic kingdom. Trade as well as agriculture was an important economic element in the life of Lower Nubia. The trade with India, which was vital to Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt and reached its high point under the Emperor Commodus (A.D. 180-192), had probably not passed through Meroe, for, as mentioned above, the trade routes from the East increasingly led across Arabia and the Red Sea directly to Egypt. But trade with central Africa, although somewhat less important, did involve Nubia and Meroe to a great degree. Even though we may assume that foreign trade was a royal monopoly in the Meroitic kingdom, it is certain that the general population of Lower Nubia also profited from it. It is possible that those Meroitic officials bearing the title *apote*, who were so numerous in Lower Nubia, had little to do with diplomatic service but rather represented the king in activities relating to trade. It was precisely the close trade relations between Meroe and Egypt, via Lower Nubia, that led to the considerable



*Fig. 75. Watercolor copy of a Meroitic wall painting representing a youth carrying two elephants (Cat. 132), probably from a palace at Meroe, original probably second to third century A.D. (Liverpool SAOS 8524).*



Graeco-Roman influence, especially apparent in the northern part of the kingdom. Such influence is particularly evident in ceramics (Cat. 231). That it also affected the royal court of Meroe is clearly demonstrated by numerous finds from royal tombs and from the city of Meroe itself (Cats. 161,215; Vol. II, Figs. 61,62, 66-68).

#### THE END OF THE MEROITIC PERIOD

The causes of the decline of the Meroitic kingdom are still largely unknown. Among the various factors that have been put forth are increasing soil erosion caused by overgrazing, which brought cattle breeding to a halt; excessive consumption of wood for the expanding production of iron; and the abandonment of trade routes along the Nile in favor of coastal routes along the Red Sea, which led to the economic isolation of Meroe. One can also assume that the strength of the Meroitic kingdom was gradually exhausted by constant battles with nomads on both sides of the Nile Valley, and particularly with the nomads of the eastern steppes and the Red Sea mountains. We are still not completely clear about the role played in Meroe and Lower Nubia by the Blemmyes, the ancestors of today's Beja, who lived between the Nile and the Red Sea. It has been historically verified,

however, that Upper Egypt was constantly and seriously threatened by this tribe.

Perhaps all of these circumstances, together with other unknown socio-economic changes, led to the end of the Kingdom of Meroe in the first half of the fourth century A.D. It has been assumed that Ezana, king of the expanding realm of Axum in northern Abyssinia, conquered the capital of Meroe around A.D. 350 and thereby brought about the final destruction of the Meroitic kingdom. However, no such conclusion can be drawn from the now famous inscription of Axum, in which Ezana gives an account of his campaign (Hintze 1967), although that inscription provides important clues to ethnic and political conditions in the Nile Valley around the middle of the fourth century.

Given the information that we have, we can probably place the date of the end of the Meroitic kingdom at some time in the first half of the fourth century. This by no means signifies the end of Meroitic culture, whose influence lived on in manifold forms. Nor does the end of the kingdom signify the end of the Meroitic people, for they, too, continued to exist, albeit under new and changed circumstances.

7

**The Ballana Culture  
and the Coming of Christianity**

Bruce G. Trigger

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For over two centuries, the Meroitic kingdom remained outside the borders of the Roman Empire but economically tied to it. The decline of the two states was partially interrelated, although (as so often happens) the weaker and more peripheral state was affected sooner and more severely. By A.D. 350, the Meroitic heartland had fallen into a prolonged dark age (Kirwan 1963; Emery 1965, 232-47; Trigger 1965, 131-46; Adams 1977, chaps. 13-14).

#### THE DECLINE OF MEROE

Because of lack of information, one can only speculate about any internal disruptions or ideological challenges that may have contributed to the disintegration of the Meroitic state. The development of trade routes along the Red Sea seems, in part, to account for the economic and cultural decline of the core of the Meroitic kingdom, which began in the first century of the Christian Era. Meroitic trade with the Roman Empire was disrupted further by the Blemmyes, ancestors of the modern Cushitic-speaking Beja of the Eastern Desert of the Sudan. Prior to the second century A.D., the Blemmyes were inoffensive cattle herders, restricted to the moister and more southerly parts of the Eastern Desert. When they obtained camels, perhaps from traders who used them to ply the desert routes between Upper Egypt and the Red Sea harbors of Berenice and Myus Hormus in Ptolemaic times, they were able to range more widely and evolved as bedouin-style raiders (Trigger 1965, 131; Zeuner 1963, 353). As Roman power ebbed, these raiders began to attack Upper Egypt and the northern part of Lower Nubia. It was their incursions that prompted the Roman Emperor Diocletian, near the end of the third century A.D., to withdraw the Roman frontier northward from Maharraqa, in central Lower Nubia, to Aswan, thereby apparently surrendering all of Lower Nubia to nominal Meroitic control.

Far more serious for the Meroites was the growing menace of the Kingdom of Axum, which arose from a civilization of southwest Arabian affinity that had established itself in the Ethiopian highlands during the first millennium B.C. By the first century A.D., the Axumites were playing a key role in the ivory trade, and in later centuries they obtained emeralds and gold from what probably had once been a Meroitic sphere of influence. The grazing land of the Butana, which lies between the Atbara River and the Blue Nile, seems to have been a theater of conflict between these two African powers. A fragmentary Greek inscription from Meroe may document an Axumite capture of the city prior to the better documented campaign of the Axumite King Ezana in that region about A.D. 350 (Kirwan 1960; Hintze 1967).

#### THE TANQASI CULTURE

Prior to Ezana's campaign, a Nubian-speaking people called the Noba had invaded and partially occupied some portions of the Nile Valley in the northern

Sudan. These people are not to be confused with the modern Nuba of the southwestern Sudan, whose languages belong to the Niger-Kordofanian stock. The original homeland of the Noba was in the savanna country west of the Nile, where Classical geographers reported them to be living early in the Christian Era. As cattle pastoralists, they must have posed a continuing threat to the settled peoples of the Nile Valley. Their irruption into the Meroitic heartland was probably the result rather than a cause of Meroitic decadence. At the time of Ezana's invasion, the Noba were living in settlements of reed huts and in brick towns that they probably had captured from the Meroites. They did nothing, however, to maintain these administrative centers, which soon fell into ruins. Thus, the Noba invasions marked the end not only of Meroitic class-structured society but also of their monumental art and architecture, state religion, and literacy (cf. Török 1974). The Meroitic language and ethnic identity were also to disappear in the Nubianization of the middle part of the Nile Valley that took place after A.D. 350. So complete was the dark age that descended upon the Meroitic heartland between A.D. 350 and 550 that no historical records are available from that period.

The archaeology of Upper Nubia is inadequately known for this period, although the Noba are tentatively associated with the still poorly defined Tanqasi culture. Thousands of burial mounds that have been attributed to this culture are found in various cemeteries located along the edge of the desert from Sennar northward to the vicinity of Gebel Barkal. These mounds are of varying sizes, but the largest occur near Shendi and at Tanqasi, across the river from El Kurru (Shinnie 1954; Chittick 1957b). The largest of the Shendi tumuli are thirty to forty meters in diameter, and five of them are located within elliptical enclosures surrounded by rough stone walls. Small mounds of this type have been found in the post-Meroitic cemeteries at Meroe (Garstang 1911). The distribution of these mound graves corresponds approximately with that of Aloa ware, a ceramic product that resembles earlier handmade pottery from Nubia and has close affinities with pottery that is still being manufactured in the central Sudan (Bentley — Crowfoot 1924).

Although the largest mounds indicate the power of Noba leaders to command labor services, the contents of the few that have been excavated suggest isolation and poverty. Under one of the largest tumuli at Tanqasi, Shinnie found only a small grave containing a single skeleton, four Aloa ware pots, a number of beads, and two silver rings. As Adams (1977, chap. 13) has pointed out, the value of these goods compares unfavorably with those occurring in quite ordinary burials of the same period in Lower Nubia. The graves suggest that for some time following the collapse of the Meroitic kingdom, its heartland was occupied by self-sufficient tribal societies that had few, if any, trading links with the north.

Meroitic Lower Nubia was less adversely affected by the events of this dark age. The region apparently remained part of the Meroitic kingdom until the centralized monarchy vanished sometime in the fourth century. A stone lion was dedicated at Qasr Ibrim in the name of King Yesbokheamani, who is estimated to have reigned at Meroe about A.D. 300 (Plumley 1966, 12). The economic and cultural prosperity of Lower Nubia survived into the fourth century. Indeed, the large number of funerary texts that date from the late Meroitic Period suggests that Lower Nubia may have served as a refuge for prominent Meroites who fled there to escape the crises farther south (Adams 1964b, 119).

It is possible that, following the collapse of the

Meroitic kingdom, local officials or refugees from Meroe may have established one or more successor states in Lower Nubia. Through their copying of Meroitic court ritual, such states could have introduced certain customs into Lower Nubia that previously had been restricted to the capital. It is possible that King Kharamadoye, who flourished in the late fourth or early fifth century A.D. and left a long Meroitic inscription in the temple at Kalabsha, was a ruler of this sort (Millet 1968, 203-12, 269-304).

By about A.D. 400, the Meroitic social order began to break down in Lower Nubia, and power seems eventually to have passed into the hands of a Nubian-speaking elite. The associated cultural changes used to be explained by postulating the irruption of a hypothetical "X-group people" into Lower Nubia. Physical anthropological

*Fig. 76. The royal burial mounds at Ballana, Ballana Period, approximately fourth to sixth century A.D.*





research now refutes the idea of a radical alteration in the population (Batraawi 1945-46; Mukherjee et al. 1955,85); and archaeology has confirmed Junker's (1925,85) suggestion of cultural continuity between the Meroitic and X-group periods, particularly in terms of items of everyday use. In ordinary sites, a gradual transition can be documented between the Meroitic and Ballana cultures (Trigger 1967; Adams 1968). It has also become clear that some of the major differences, particularly in pottery styles, must be attributed to the increasing cultural dominance of Christian Egypt rather than to the appearance of a new population.

The concept of a distinct "X-group people" therefore appears to be without foundation. The Ballana culture seems to have belonged to all of the inhabitants of Lower Nubia, that is, to the descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the region in the Meroitic Period together with any newcomers. Because it does not designate a specific ethnic group or their culture, the term "X-group" has been abandoned. What used to be called the "X-group culture" is now called the Ballana culture after the location of its largest necropolis (Fig. 76; Trigger 1965,45-47; for the informal use of the term "Ballana Civilization," see Kirwan 1953). The new name also emphasizes the Lower Nubian origins of this culture. Sites belonging to it are found from Aswan at least as far south as the Third Cataract.

It has been suggested that Nubian-speaking people may have lived in Lower Nubia from the time of the Meroitic recolonization of that area early in the Christian Era (Adams 1977, chap. 13). However, any Nubians who were there must have already adopted a Meroitic style of life prior to their arrival and been governed by officials who bore Meroitic names and whose deeds were recorded solely in the Meroitic language. The rise of the Ballana culture may be associated with the overthrow of this elite and their replacement by rulers whose language and sense of ethnic identity were Nubian. The prior acculturation of Nubian-speakers to Meroitic ways might explain how the apparent replacement of the Meroitic language by the Nubian language produced so little evidence of population movements or local disruption. Yet, contrariwise, it may be argued that when newcomers conform to established patterns (as nomads often do upon entering sedentary regions), evidence of their arrival may be difficult to detect in the archaeological record. It can also be pointed out that there is no specific evidence of Nubian-speakers in Lower Nubia prior to the alleged settlement of the Nobadae following the withdrawal of the Roman frontier to Aswan (Trigger 1965,137-38; for general principles, Palmer 1965,180-81). Whenever they arrived in Lower Nubia, it was these people who gave their name to the later Nubian Kingdom of Nobatia. From a cultural point of view, it seems of little historical importance whether the new rulers of Lower Nubia developed from an indigenous Nubian-speaking population or entered the region as part of a broader wave

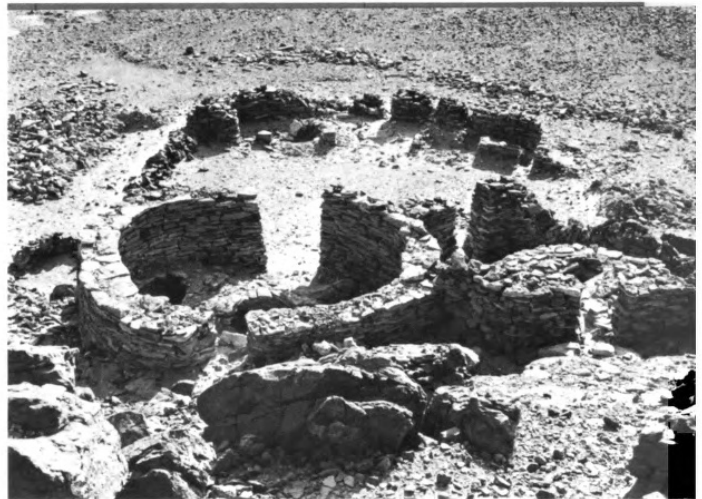


Fig. 77. Graves attributed to Blemmye chieftains, showing rough stone slab construction, at Khor Abu Sinna, near Kalabsha, Ballana Period, fourth to fifth century A.D. (after Rieke 1967).

of Nubian migrations from the south and west at the end of the Meroitic Period.

The Ballana Period appears in general to have been a time of economic dislocation and political turmoil in Lower Nubia. It was also a period of increasing economic and cultural dependence upon Egypt. Following Roman withdrawal, the Blemmyes came to control the northern part of Lower Nubia (Fig. 77; Woolley — Randall-MacIver 1910,104-5). Their disruption of settled life probably explains why sites of the Ballana culture are smaller and fewer in this region than farther south. Cemeteries and villages in the rest of Lower Nubia, though normally continuations of Meroitic sites, are also smaller and more widely separated than they had been previously. Only in the Batn el Hagar, above the Second Cataract of the Nile, does there appear to have been a larger population than before (Adams 1977, chap. 13). The settlement of this desolate region may itself be a symptom of troubled times.

The increasing impoverishment of many formerly prosperous communities is reflected in their architecture. Mud-brick buildings continued to be constructed, although the walls were often thinner than before, and barrel-vaulted roofs were becoming less common. Increasingly throughout this period, mud-brick construction was supplemented or replaced by irregular walls formed of rough stone slabs set into generous quantities of mud mortar. These walls, which were unable to bear much weight, continued to be built well into the following Christian Period (Fig. 78).

Ordinary graves were also smaller and poorer than previously. The substructures were of the same types as those of the Meroitic Period, although "cave" graves had

become rare while "niche" graves were far more frequent (Figs. 79,80). A new ethnic strain may account for the flexed postures of some burials, which now occurred in cemeteries alongside the extended "Meroitic" style of burial, and for the southward, as opposed to westward, orientation of some bodies (Adams 1977, chap. 13). Alternatively, the contracted burials may simply have been an adaptation to the constricted space available in niche graves. While funerary offerings continued, they were reduced in number and variety. Pottery and weapons were common, but except for beads imported goods were rare.

The mud-brick pyramids or mastabas and chapels that had constituted the superstructures of upper-class Meroitic graves were no longer constructed, nor were burials equipped with stelae, offering tables, *ba*-statues, or funerary texts. When graves of the Ballana culture were distinguished by superstructures, these invariably took the form of an earth mound, sometimes covered with pebbles (Fig. 81). Yet domesticated animals and human retainers were now interred in upper-class graves on a more lavish scale than in Meroitic times.

The Ballana culture was not uniformly one of impoverishment and deepening barbarism. Some large-scale industry and regional trade continued. At the beginning of the Ballana Period, the Meroitic potteries went out of use and, for a time, Nubia appears to have been swamped by Egyptian imports. Eventually, red ware of late Roman design began to be manufactured at Debeira East, a short distance north of Wadi Halfa. Much of this pottery was an imitation of Roman *terra sigillata* ware, often duplicating types that had been present in Nubia as early as the third century A.D. (Trigger 1965, 133). Adams (1977, chap. 13) suggests that the Debeira kilns may have been established by immigrant potters from Egypt and that they produced all of the finer wares of the period found throughout Nubia. Such pottery circulated in huge quantities and was one of the few quality goods to be found in the average household. The handmade pottery that was manufactured in each household or village continued to adhere to the traditions of the Meroitic Period.

For the first time, heavy objects, such as spears, swords, knives, saws, cooking utensils, and furniture, were made of iron, although the use of such items apparently was restricted mainly to the upper classes. Blacksmiths' tool kits indicate that iron was forged locally. Technological innovations, such as socketed attachments, copy Egyptian models.

#### THE BALLANA STATE

The archaeological evidence also testifies to marked variations in social status within the Ballana culture. A few cemeteries contain much larger and richer tumuli than are found elsewhere. Most of these cemeteries appear to be associated with centers of regional administration, which may have been the seats

Fig. 78. Tentative reconstruction of the Western Building at Arminna West, built of mud, mud-brick, and rough stones, Christian Period, probably sixth to ninth century A.D. (after Trigger 1967).

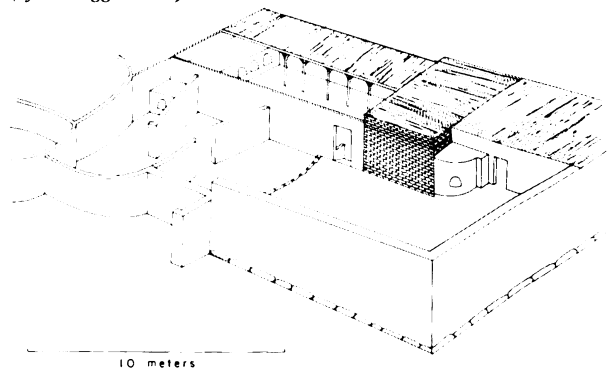
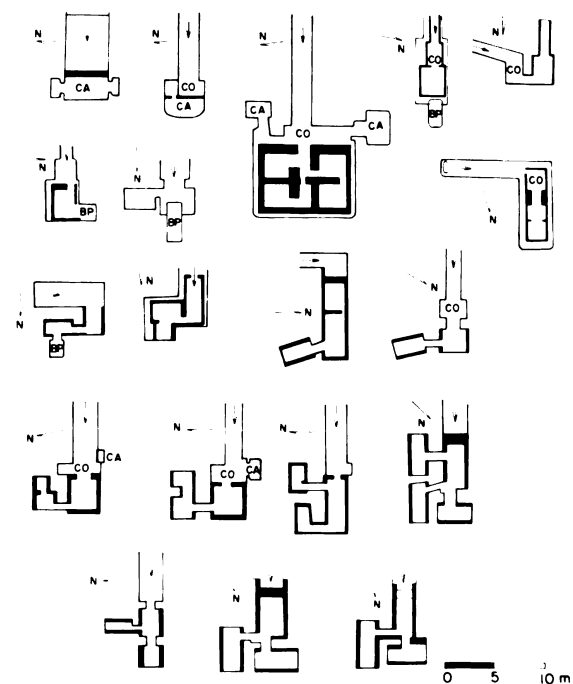


Fig. 79. Principal tomb types from Qustul and Ballana. CA = cave; CO = court; BP = burial pit; heavy line = brick construction; single-barbed arrow + N indicates north and shows orientation of each tomb; double-barbed arrow shows slope of ramp leading to tomb (after Trigger 1969a).

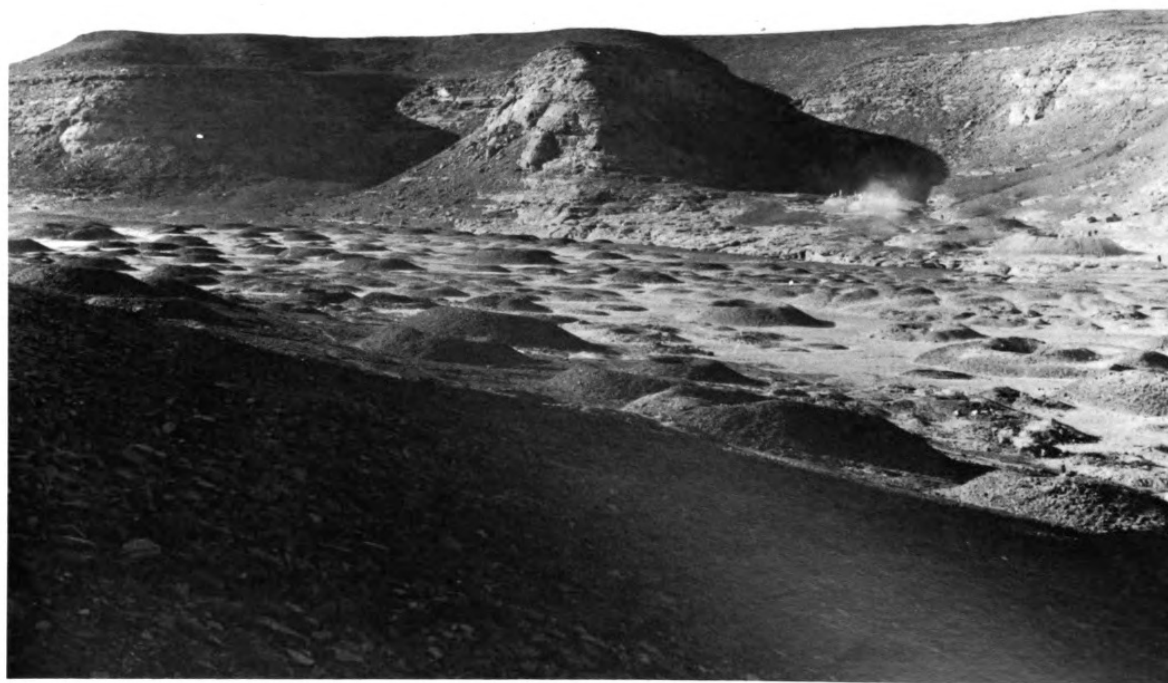






*Fig. 80. Typical niche grave at Toshka West, Ballana Period, fourth to sixth century A.D. (after Simpson 1962).*

*Fig. 81. Burial mounds at Qasr Ibrim, Ballana Period, fourth to sixth century A.D.*



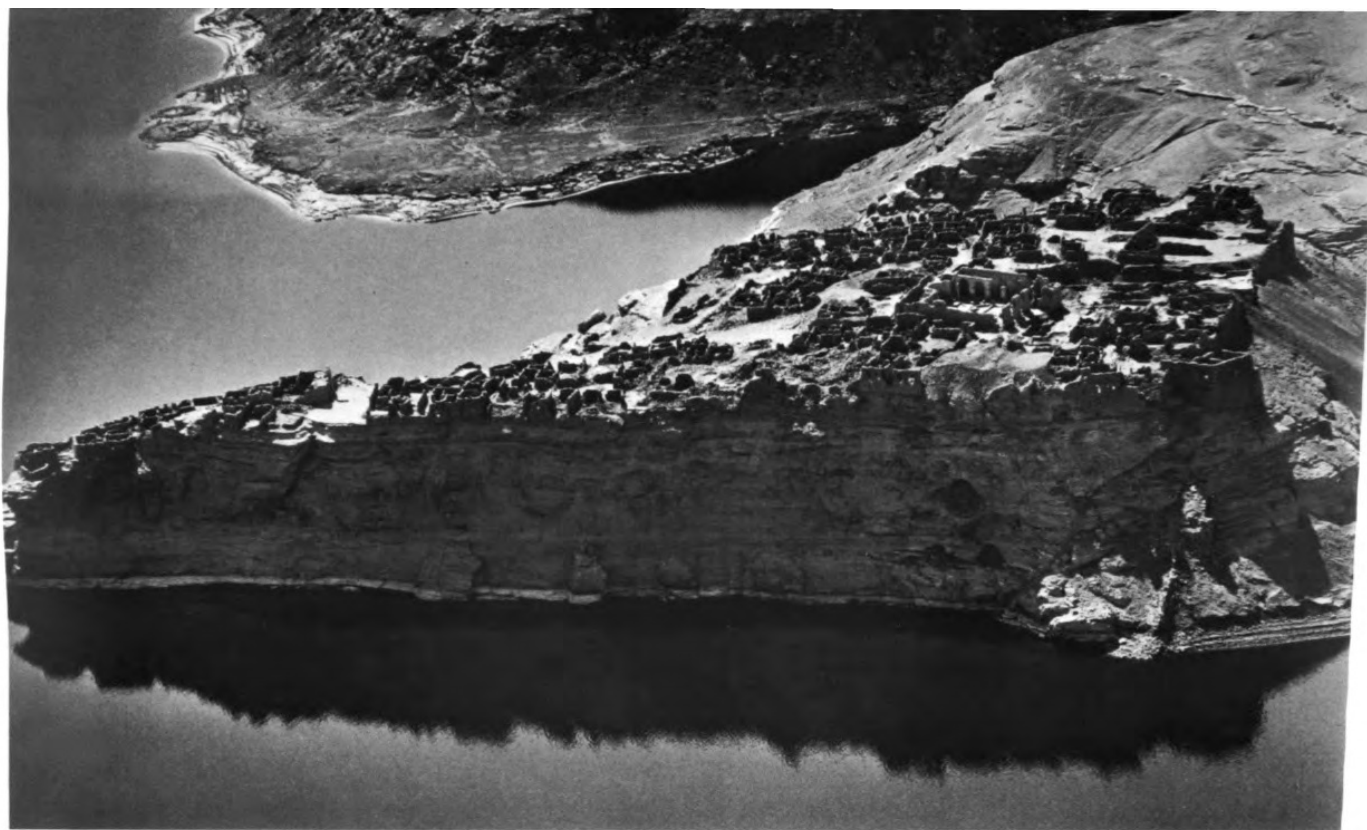


Fig. 82. View of Qasr Ibrim.

of powerful families that had exercised control over particular regions for a number of generations. Sites such as Qasr Ibrim (Fig. 82), Gemai, Ferka (Kirwan 1939), Kosha, and perhaps Sai may have been controlled by local rulers in a feudal-type political order. By far the largest and richest graves in the whole of Nubia occur in the huge cemeteries at Ballana (Fig. 76) and Qustul, located on opposite banks of the Nile midway between Faras and the fortress of Gebel Adda (Emery—Kirwan 1938; Emery 1948). These cemeteries contain tombs apparently belonging to kings, who at certain times must have exercised hegemony over all of Lower Nubia and farther south. Since both cemeteries have graves of all sizes and every degree of elaboration (Fig. 79), it is clear that they served whole communities rather than royalty only, as did the major cemeteries of ancient Meroe. It remains to be determined whether the cemeteries at Ballana and Qustul were used at the same time or sequentially. If the royal family was divided into two or more lineages, it is possible that each cemetery may have served one moiety and its supporters. It is also possible that the principal graves do not carry through to the end of the Ballana Period (Trigger 1969a).

About forty tombs at Ballana and Qustul have been designated as royal because of their size and opulent contents. Each such grave was covered by a mound that was sometimes as large as seventy-seven meters in diameter and thirteen meters high. Beneath the mound

an inclined passage cut into the hard alluvium led downwards to a pit or a series of interconnecting pits containing several barrel-vaulted brick rooms that in one instance (Tomb Q 3) were clearly arranged in the form of a multi-roomed dwelling (Fig. 83). The principal burial in each tomb was adorned with special regalia and laid on a canopied wooden bier in the room nearest the entrance to the tomb. In each of the unplundered tombs was found a single occupant, or sometimes a man and a woman, wearing an elaborate diadem sheathed with silver, decorated with embossed designs, and encrusted with carnelian, garnet, beryl, and glass (Cats. 266, 267). Although the workmanship of these diadems shows Byzantine influence, the largest of them generally resemble portrayals of Meroitic crowns. Much of the iconography of both the Ballana and the Meroitic crowns ultimately was derived from ancient Egypt (Trigger 1969b, 257). The tombs were stocked with food, wine, and cooking utensils, as well as weapons, tools, jewelry (Cats. 268-272), harnesses (Cat. 274), silver plate, bronze incense burners (Cats. 275, 276), lamp stands (Cat. 279), wooden chests, glass cups, games, toilet articles (Cat. 282), fine textiles, and other luxury goods (Cats. 278, 281; Fig. 84). Such goods were both of local manufacture and imports from Egypt (Bissing 1939a).

Human retainers were buried inside the larger tombs, and additional soldiers and retainers, as well as slaughtered horses, camels, sheep, donkeys, and dogs,



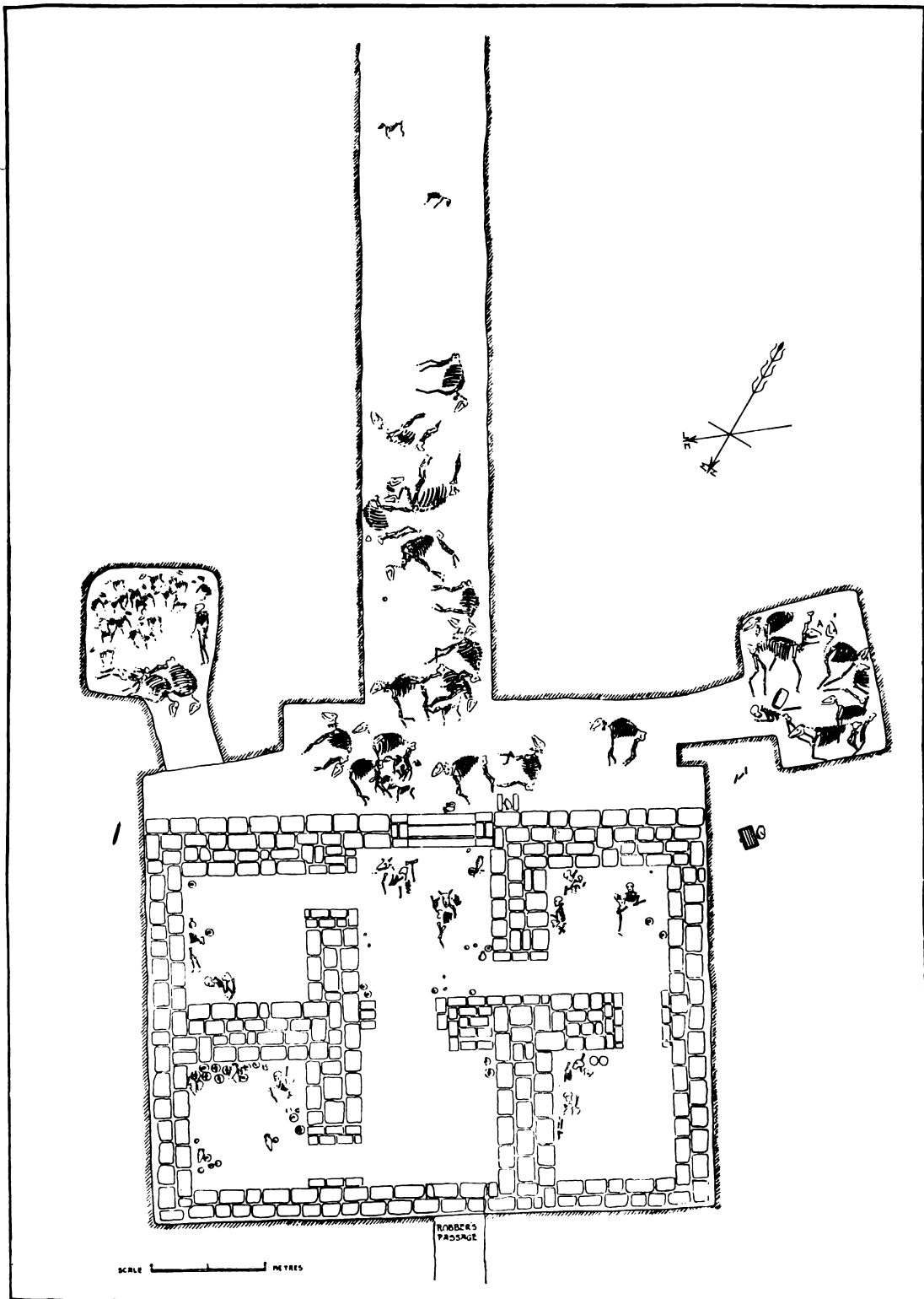


Fig. 83. Drawing of Tomb Q 3 at Qustul, Ballana Period, fourth to sixth century A.D. (after Emery—Kirwan 1938).



*Fig. 84. Bronze lamp in the form of a man's head (Cat. 278), Ballana Period, latter half of the fourth century A.D. (Cairo JE 71124).*



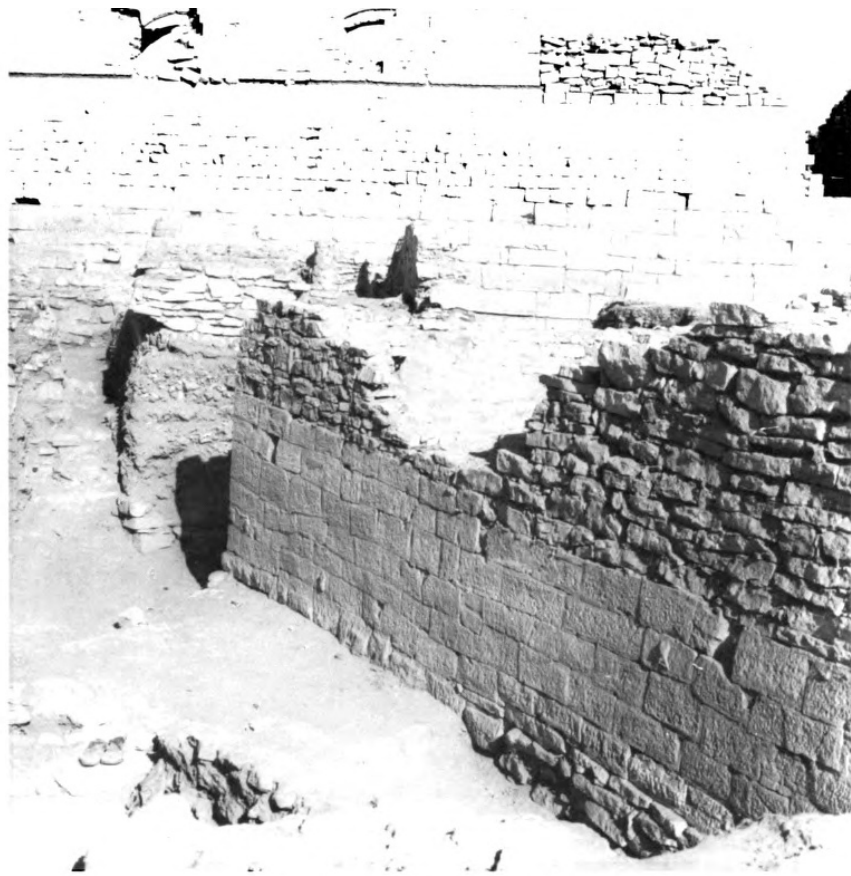


Fig. 85. South face of House X 4 at Qasr Ibrim, a tavern in Ballana times, showing lower wall of worked stone surmounted by later rough stonework, in use until the late Christian Period.

were interred in the open courtyards in front of the tombs and on the tomb ramps. No more than seventeen retainers are recorded for any one tomb, but problems of coping with ground water in the excavations may have resulted in additional bodies going unnoticed. It seems that queens were slain and buried with full honors, either beside their husbands or in a separate room of their husbands' tombs. This was a custom very different from that of Meroe, where queens always had their own tombs and seem to have played a significant role in the political life of the kingdom after their husbands' deaths (Trigger 1969b, 257-61).

Although no official buildings constructed during the Ballana Period have yet been uncovered, the Meroitic administrative center atop Qasr Ibrim was renovated at that time. The stone houses at this site were similar in plan to those of their Meroitic predecessors but were better built and finished than the Meroitic houses had been. Each had from five to eight rooms, and one house had been used as a tavern (Fig. 85). There was little bone or charcoal refuse to suggest the intensive occupation of these structures (Plumley—Adams 1974, 226). Like the larger tombs, these buildings indicate the existence in northern Nubia of a few centers of moderate prosperity and opulence as well as of power.

Ownership of camels would have permitted the Ballana rulers to meet the Blemmye raiders on equal terms and to exercise control over trans-Saharan trade routes west of the Nile Valley. The ability to traverse routes hitherto unsuitable even for donkey traffic would have allowed the Ballana traders to circumvent the tribal peoples of Upper Nubia and to engage in more lucrative direct trade south and west of that area. No doubt, some of the large numbers of professional soldiers whose presence is attested at major Ballana centers were used to guard these caravans on their dangerous journeys to and from the Sudan. The pioneering of the trans-Saharan routes may explain the poverty and isolation of Upper Nubia and perhaps provided the sources of raw materials that the Ballana rulers were able to barter for luxury goods from Egypt for their own use. Other Egyptian goods may have been obtained as booty or as goodwill presents from the Byzantine government.

The crowns found at Ballana and Qustul indicate that the Ballana sovereigns adopted or retained certain specific symbols of Meroitic kingship. Nevertheless, many features of the Ballana royal burials were not inspired by Meroitic customs. The pyramid was rejected as a funerary symbol, and the substructure of the Ballana royal tombs rapidly evolved away from the Meroitic



*Fig. 86. Graffito on temple wall at Kalabsha, showing King Silko in an equestrian pose slaying an enemy and being crowned with a Meroitic royal diadem by a victory goddess, Ballana Period, fifth or sixth century A.D.*

pattern (Vol. II, Fig. 20). It has been pointed out that in certain respects the Ballana tumuli resemble the royal burials at Kerma (Vol. II, Fig. 10), about two millennia earlier, more than they do the intervening Meroitic ones (Adams 1977, chap. 13). It is possible that in the interval some indirect link between the two cultures may have been kept alive in the grasslands west of the Nile Valley.

The Ballana culture appears to have been essentially

non-literate. Although the Meroitic script was apparently used at Qasr Ibrim in the Ballana Period (Plumley—Adams 1974, 226), and two Meroitic characters are alleged to have survived into the Old Nubian alphabet, which came into use in the eighth century A.D., the Meroitic script, like the Meroitic language, appears to have gone out of use at this time. Funerary texts are conspicuously lacking from even the richest cemeteries,



and neither ostraca nor papyri are found in ordinary house sites. The one monumental inscription that can be attributed to the late Ballana Period, that of the Nubian King Silko, was composed in barbarous Greek.

It has been claimed that Meroitic state buildings at Gebel Adda, Meinarti, and perhaps Buhen were destroyed deliberately during the Ballana Period (Adams 1977, chap. 13). Stone blocks removed from Meroitic monuments provided occasional building elements for the royal tombs at Ballana and Qustul. Although both the Nubians and the Blemmyes venerated the goddess Isis sufficiently to take up arms to prevent the rededication of her temples at Philae as churches in the fifth century A.D., there is no evidence that the Ballana monarchs relied upon a specific state religion to bolster their regime. While they acknowledged the Meroitic deities, they do not appear to have sponsored lavish cults for them (Adams 1977, chap. 13). Christian iconography became increasingly common throughout Nubia during the Ballana Period, not only on objects imported from Egypt (Cat. 277), but also on those that were manufactured locally. These objects may have been popular merely as talismans of the state cult then prevailing in Egypt and do not constitute proof that Christianity was widespread in Nubia at this time. Nevertheless, the speed and apparent ease with which Christianity became the state religion of Nubia in the middle of the sixth century suggests that at least a favorable predisposition toward it must have become widespread during the Ballana Period (Adams 1965a, 172).

It is far from certain that the kingdom centered on Ballana and Qustul was at all times coextensive with the Ballana culture. Apparently in the fifth century, King Silko recorded several military campaigns against the Blemmyes who were living between Qasr Ibrim and Aswan, and other campaigns on the southern frontiers of his kingdom. He compelled the local rulers in these areas to acknowledge him as their overlord. In the temple at Kalabsha, a graffito represents him in an equestrian pose transfixing an enemy with a lance (Kirwan 1963, 75). In Roman fashion, he wears a short mail tunic and a cape flying from his shoulders. By contrast, the winged Victory hovering above him crowns him not with laurel but with a Meroitic royal diadem (Fig. 86). While it is uncertain that Silko was one of the kings buried at Ballana or Qustul, or even that he belonged to the same dynasty, the core of his kingdom probably lay in the formerly Meroitic region of Lower Nubia.

The power of these monarchs appears to have been based largely upon a military force that allowed them to monopolize lucrative trade routes and to exert their power throughout northern Nubia. For all the exotic luster of the Ballana culture, its government (or governments) may have resembled that of the *kashef*, the official who controlled lower Nubia in the eighteenth century. The *kashef* and his henchmen traveled through Lower Nubia on horseback, wringing taxes from

the impoverished villagers and, by a display of force, assuring the latter's none-too-willing obedience (Trigger 1965, 141).

By the sixth century A.D., the Ballana state, which Silko probably had brought to its maximum extent, was known as the Kingdom of Nobatia. Its capital was at Faras, only a few miles from Ballana. Nobatia, however, was only one of three Nubian kingdoms that by this time had been consolidated along the middle portion of the Nile River. South of Nobatia was Makuria. Little is yet known about the archaeology of this kingdom. Its early rulers may have been buried at Tanqasi, although, as Adams (1977, chap. 14) suggests, the beginnings of the kingdom may equally lie beneath the ruins of Old Dongola, which was its capital at a later date. Still farther south was the Kingdom of Alwa, whose capital was at Soba, near Khartoum.

#### THE CHRISTIANIZING OF NUBIA

Early in the sixth century, Byzantium concluded a military and trade alliance with the Kingdom of Axum, which had been Christian since the fourth century. Already in A.D. 524, the Byzantines had promised to provide Blemmye and Nobadae recruits to support an Axumite invasion of the Yemen (Kawar 1964). It therefore seemed desirable to the Byzantines to convert the Nubian kingdoms in order to confirm their friendship and support. It was Byzantine policy to convert pagan peoples living beyond the borders of the empire as a means of promoting imperial security. The final closing of the Temple of Isis at Philae about A.D. 540 was accepted by the Nubians without incident.

The conversion of Nubia was complicated by the struggle within Eastern Christianity between the Dyophysite doctrine approved by the imperial government and the Monophysite doctrine that was the focus of Egyptian and Syrian opposition to the imperial administration. Byzantine chroniclers claim that Nobatia was converted to Monophysite Christianity about A.D. 543 and Alwa about 580, while the intervening state of Makuria was converted to Orthodox Christianity about A.D. 570. The differing religious options made by the rulers of these adjacent Nubian states appear to reflect their mutual hostility. No doubt each was seeking to forge advantageous alliances with different groups within the Byzantine Empire (Kirwan 1937).

The conversion of Nubia not only was a considerable advantage to its rulers in their foreign relations but also strengthened their nascent polities, much as conversion to Christianity strengthened the petty kings of northern Europe at the same period. Christianity provided these rulers and their subjects with a highly disciplined common bond of faith (Adams 1977, chap. 14). A literate clergy, trained in church administration, also provided the kings with more effective machinery for governing their kingdoms than they had previously possessed. Literacy seems to have remained, as in medieval Europe,

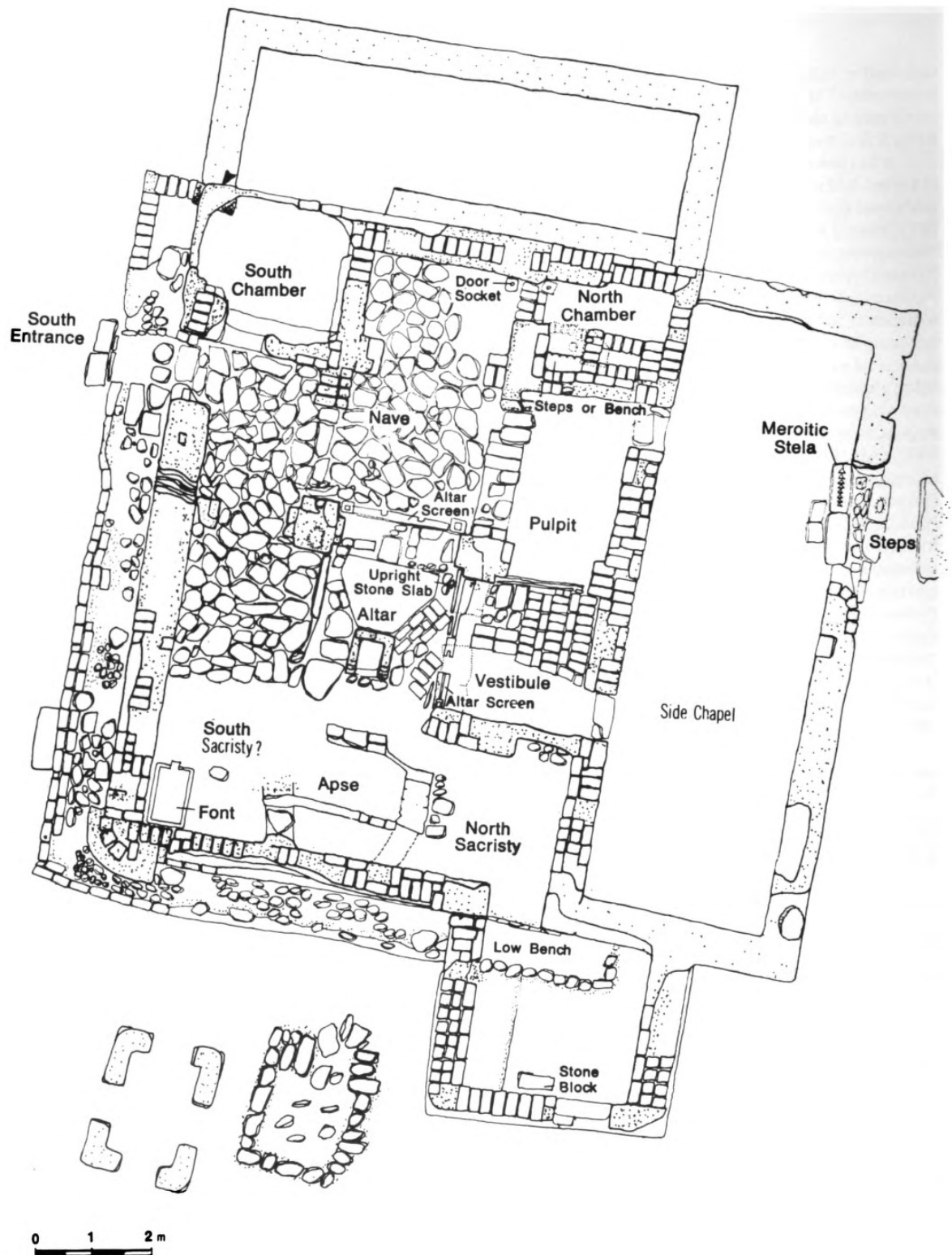


Fig. 87. Ground plan of the church at Arminna West, Christian Period, in use from the eighth to the twelfth century A.D. (after Trigger 1967).





Fig. 88. *The Great Cathedral at Faras, eighth to twelfth century A.D., from the southeast, with the tomb of Bishop Johannes (died A.D. 1005).*

primarily a priestly attribute. In addition, the Byzantine government supplied the rulers of Nobatia with architects who fortified a number of key centers with strong, well-built enclosure walls. These towns, whose defenses have many details in common, include Kalabsha, Sabagura, Ikhmindi, Sheikh Daud, and possibly Gebel Sahaba and Faras (Trigger 1965, 146). Christian churches, unlike pagan temples, were primarily places of assembly. Before long, churches were established in every community (Fig. 87). After conversion, funerary offerings terminated abruptly in all cemeteries, suggesting popular support as well as royal patronage for the new faith.

In addition to consolidating its power, the adoption

of Christianity profoundly affected the ideology of the Nubian monarchy. The Nubian kings appear to have adopted Byzantine court ritual, and their role as monarchs was colored by Byzantine concepts. No burial of a Christian king has yet been identified in Nubia, and it appears that, like Christian interments generally, royal burials became relatively simple affairs (Fig. 88).

The Nubian king's claim of eminent domain, as expressed by the fiction that all Nubians were his slaves, may have been a continuation of pre-Christian ideology. It was, however, not a concept that was in practice vigorously upheld, at least in Lower Nubia (Adams 1977, chap. 14).



## Medieval Nubia

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Less than a century after the Christianization of Nubia, Egypt itself fell to the armies of Islam. The invaders promptly turned their attention toward the southern country, but the same force that had subdued Byzantine Egypt was soundly repulsed by the Nubians. A second invasion ten years later, in A.D. 652, was equally unsuccessful; it was followed by the conclusion of a treaty under which the Nubians were permitted to retain their Christian faith and their political sovereignty in exchange for the payment of a small annual tribute to the governor of Egypt. This instrument actually remained in force for more than six hundred years.

The Medieval Period (often called the Christian Period) represents the last great flowering of indigenous civilization in Nubia. Although the medieval kingdoms were not quite so far-flung as was the empire of Kush in its heyday, they nevertheless remained firmly independent of foreign control and at times exerted a considerable influence beyond their own borders. After the Arab conquest of Egypt, the Nubian kings proclaimed themselves official protectors of the Egyptian Christian (Coptic) church, much as the Russian czars assumed the protection of the Greek Orthodox church after the fall of Constantinople. And in architecture, literature, and the decorative arts, the creative achievements of the medieval Nubians were a match for those of any earlier period.

At the time of Christianization there were, according to church historians, three independent kingdoms in Nubia: Nobatia in the north, Makuria in the center, and Alwa in the south (see p. 117). Nobatia seems to have been absorbed by Makuria at the beginning of the eighth century; thereafter, the two formed a single state extending at least from the First to the Fourth Cataract of the Nile (Fig. 89). Its rulers dwelled at Dongola, in the southern part of the kingdom, while Lower Nubia was under the special jurisdiction of a royal deputy, the eparch. The territory of Alwa lay far to the south of Makuria; its capital was at Soba, not far from the junction of the Blue and the White Niles.

The medieval Nubian kingdoms were visited by an Egyptian envoy, Ibn Selim el Aswani, at the end of the tenth century. He was very favorably impressed with both the people and the country, which he described as peaceful and prosperous, with many fine churches and monasteries. We know from other records that the king of Makuria maintained a fairly elaborate court modeled more or less on that of Byzantium; Byzantine titles were in general use for civil officials. However, the rulers of Nubia retained one purely indigenous custom from earlier times: the royal succession often passed from the king to his sister's son rather than to his own son.

Religion was a pervasive force in Nubia as it was throughout the medieval world. Its influence is almost wholly predominant in the literature, art, and iconography of the age. Organizationally, the Nubian church was simply a part of the Egyptian (Coptic) church, and its bishops were appointed by the Coptic

patriarch in Alexandria. Most of the bishops and clergy were, however, Nubians rather than Egyptians, and, interestingly enough, Greek rather than Coptic (the latest form of the ancient Egyptian language) was used in the Nubian liturgy. In the later Middle Ages, many religious texts also employed the native Nubian language, which was written in a modified version of the Greek alphabet.

According to ecclesiastical records, there were thirteen episcopal sees in Nubia, though the location of some of them is obscure. We know, however, from archaeological finds that the bishops at such places as Qasr Ibrim, Faras, and Dongola were possessed of quite imposing cathedrals, and that after death they were buried in relatively elaborate tombs. In addition to cathedrals, there were village churches in every major settlement, and a considerable number of monasteries. Ecclesiastical officials, like civil officials, were designated primarily by Greek titles.

In architecture as in liturgy, the Nubian church developed canons of its own which were quite different from those of Egypt. The typical Nubian church was a plain rectangular building with a central nave flanked by aisles of equal width, the nave terminating at its eastern end in a semicircular apse (Fig. 90). The apse was, however, concealed within a rectangular shell of masonry, and behind it there often ran a narrow passage connecting the sacristy with the baptistry at the eastern corners of the building. This feature is unique to Nubian churches. The earliest churches were adorned primarily with carvings in wood and stone (Cat. 289), but after the eighth century the use of painted murals became general (Fig. 91).

Fragments of paintings have been observed in over fifty ruined churches in Nubia, but only in the rarest cases — most notably in the miraculously preserved cathedral of Faras — have they been found in anything like intact condition (Fig. 92). Those which have survived are among the enduring glories of Nubian art. Their subjects include conventional scenes such as the Nativity and the Crucifixion, idealized representations of the Holy Family, archangels, and saints, and what are apparently actual portraits of Nubian kings, eparchs (Cat. 293), and bishops (Fig. 93; Cat. 292). As with so many aspects of Nubian art, the church murals proclaim an obvious debt to Egyptian and Coptic influences, yet they have also an unmistakably Nubian quality, particularly in their use of brilliant colors. In this respect, they are comparable to Christian Nubian decorated pottery, which flourished at the same period and which made use of some of the same decorative motifs.

In Nubia, as in many other places, the religious spirit of the early Middle Ages gave way in later centuries to a secular spirit of military feudalism. After the twelfth century, castle building rather than church building became the chief preoccupation of the Nubians; churches became smaller and more primitive in each generation while castles became larger and more elaborate. This

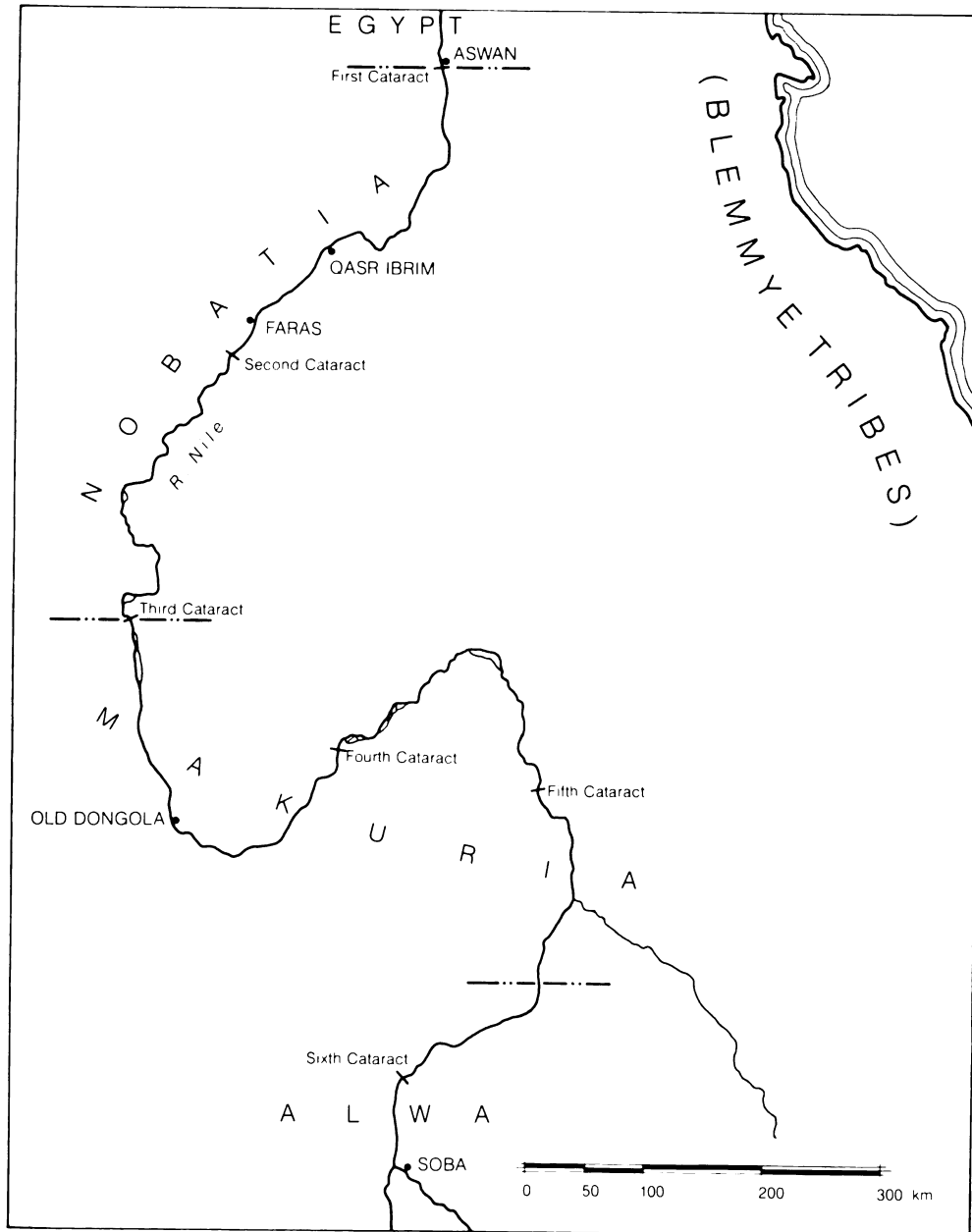




Fig. 89. Medieval Nubian kingdoms in the seventh century A.D.

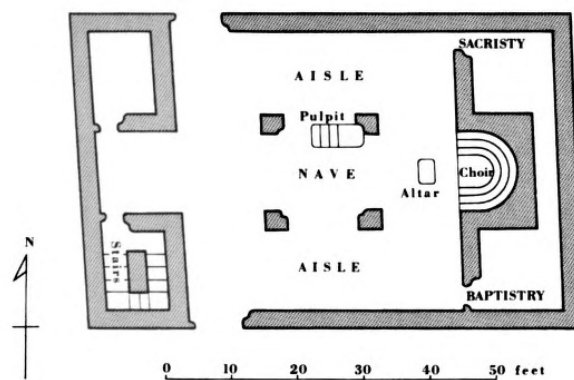


Fig. 90. Plan of a typical Nubian church of the tenth century A.D.

Fig. 91. Fresco in the Great Cathedral at Faras showing the Archangel Michael protecting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, Christian Period, A.D. 975-1000 (now Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).





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trend signaled the declining influence not only of the church but also of the monarchies, whose authority was increasingly challenged by local warlords and rival dynastic claimants. In the fifteenth century, the once powerful kingdoms broke up into a maze of warring principalities, and the coup de grace to medieval

Nubian civilization was dealt by the invasion of hordes of Arab nomads. It was the Islamic faith of these vigorous newcomers that ultimately triumphed over the Christianity of the settled inhabitants, and Islam remains the universal faith of the Nubians today.

125

*Fig. 92. The Nativity fresco in situ in the Great Cathedral at Faras during excavation, Christian Period, end of the tenth to beginning of the eleventh century A.D. (now Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).*

*Fig. 93. Bishop Marianos (A.D. 1003-1036), detail of fresco from the Great Cathedral at Faras, Christian Period (Warsaw 234036).*





## Ceramics

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The potter's art has a very long history in the Sudan, so long that one scholar has even suggested its original development there. While this idea has not been widely accepted by other archaeologists, it can at least be said that the Sudan is one of the very few areas of the globe where the making of pottery actually preceded the tilling of the soil, between six and seven thousand years ago.

The earliest Sudanese pottery, known only from scattered fragments found in prehistoric camp sites, was made by Mesolithic peoples who lived in the vicinity of present-day Khartoum. Their vessels seem to have been mostly large open bowls made from the ordinary red-brown mud of the Nile flood plain. They were not given any painted decoration, but the exteriors were usually embellished with fine wavy lines made with some sort of multiple-toothed comb.

A few centuries later, in the Khartoum Neolithic culture, a number of ceramic innovations can be observed. Vessels were now often given a burnished finish by rubbing the surface with a smooth pebble, and they were adorned with "dotted wavy lines" and other forms of incised or stamped decoration (Vol. II, Fig. 2). An even more distinctive innovation of the Khartoum Neolithic is the first appearance of "black-topped red polished ware," which was to have a very long subsequent history in Nubia and elsewhere. These vessels (nearly all open bowls) have a dark red exterior and a shiny black interior, the black extending also to the outside for a half inch to an inch below the rim. The red was achieved by painting the surface with red ochre before firing, while the black seems to have been imparted by placing the vessel, directly after firing, rim downward in a mass of densely smoking material such as leaves or straw. No one knows when or where this technique first developed; at one time or another, it was characteristic of a great deal of the native pottery of northeastern Africa, and was also known as far away as India. The Khartoum Neolithic potters also made a few vessels that were all black and a few that were all red. The shapes, like those of the preceding period, were mostly open bowls.

Makers of Khartoum Neolithic pottery lived all over the central Sudan, and also as far north as Lower Nubia. In this latter area, they shared dominion with another Neolithic people, the Abkans, who made mostly plain red pottery in quite a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Remains of the Abkan people have been found only in the immediate proximity of the Nile, and it is surmised that they lived primarily by fishing.

The indigenous pottery industry of Nubia really came into its own in the A-group period, beginning perhaps around 3500 B.C. A-group pottery shows many resemblances to the wares of Predynastic Egypt, and in fact it was once thought that the people themselves were immigrants from Egypt. Today we recognize that A-group pottery is derived in considerable part from the earlier local traditions of the Khartoum and Abkan

Neolithic, although Egyptian influence is certainly also recognizable.

A-group pottery is much more abundant and also much more diversified than are the wares of earlier periods. At this time the Nubians first adopted the practice of burying large quantities of pottery with their dead, and the archaeologist may sometimes find as many as a dozen intact vessels in a single grave. They include black polished wares, red polished wares, and black-topped red polished wares. The latter often have a "rippled" finish produced by finely grooving the exterior surface with a pebble (Fig. 94); some vessels also have incised or punched decoration reminiscent of the Khartoum Neolithic. However, the finest of all A-group pottery, produced near the end of the period, has geometric painted designs in dark red on an orange background (Cats. 6-8). These vessels usually have a burnished black interior and are characterized by extremely thin walls. A-group pottery occurs in a variety of bowl and jar shapes, not infrequently with pointed bottoms and with gracefully incurved rims.

In the third millennium B.C., the A-group was replaced in Lower Nubia by the C-group. Although there seems to be a hiatus of several hundred years between the two occupations (see Chapter 4), a historical connection between the A-group and the C-group pottery industries is very evident. A great deal of C-group pottery consists of black-topped red polished bowls not markedly distinct from those of the A-group. The "signature" pottery of this period is, however, a shiny black ware covered with incised geometric patterns which, after firing, were filled with chalk to produce a white-on-black effect (Cats. 28, 31, 33, 39, 40). Occasionally, red vessels were given the same treatment (Cats. 29, 30, 32). Near the end of the C-group period, various colored chalks were used to produce multicolored designs (Cat. 38).

While the C-group was flourishing in Lower Nubia, a distinct though probably related culture arose at Kerma, near the Third Cataract of the Nile. The Kerma people did not make black incised vessels; their most characteristic pottery is a black-topped red polished ware which they made in distinctive beaker forms (Cats. 61, 67). Kerma beakers are notable for their extremely hard, thin walls; from a purely technical standpoint, they are probably the finest examples of handmade pottery ever produced in the Sudan. Other Kerma vessels include various spouted forms (Cats. 62-65), and a few very unusual vessels with polychrome painted decoration (Cat. 68).

The Neolithic, A-group, C-group, and Kerma potters all shared a basically primitive technology, unaided by the use of the potter's wheel or of elaborate kilns. However, the Nubians became familiar with wheel-made pottery as far back as A-group times, when they began receiving a certain number of Egyptian-made vessels in trade (Cats. 5, 11). Thereafter, Egyptian wheel-made vessels became commonplace in A-group, C-group, and Kerma settlements, though never present in very







*Fig. 94. Pebble-burnished black-topped red-ware vessel, A-group culture, about 3000 B.C. (Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).*

large numbers. They occur mostly in the form of undecorated utility vessels which must have been imported not for their own sake but as containers for honey, oil, and other Egyptian goods.

It was not until the Egyptian colonization of the New Kingdom (c. 1570-1080 B.C.) that the technique of pottery making on the wheel was finally adopted by the Nubians themselves. With it came a general adoption of Egyptian standards of shape and design. Yet the older, indigenous traditions did not entirely disappear, for a few handmade vessels continued to be produced, apparently by Nubian women, down to modern times. They are a regular though little-noticed component of the Meroitic, Ballana, and Christian ceramic inventories (Cats. 260, 263, 264), and they even enjoyed a brief renaissance at the end of the Middle Ages, when the use of the potter's wheel was apparently lost. It is, nevertheless, to the wheel-made wares that we must chiefly look for the later developments in Nubian ceramic history.

Pottery making, perhaps because of its early industrialization, never became one of the high arts of Egypt. The craftsmen of the northern country preferred to express their virtuosity in vessels of carved stone and of metal, while the Egyptian pottery factories produced a severely utilitarian product with only the faintest suggestions of artistic embellishment (Cat. 66). Yet the potters of Egypt were careful to select fine desert clays and to fire them at high temperatures in forced-draught kilns, so that their wares, though artistically inferior to those of the Nubians, were technically much superior. For this reason, there was always a demand for Egyptian vessels in the southern country, and they are a continuing part of the total Nubian ceramic inventory.

The strictly utilitarian character of most Egyptian pottery is faithfully mirrored in the earliest wheel-made wares of Nubia. Presumably these were initially manufactured by transplanted Egyptian craftsmen brought in under the colonial regime, but even after the Nubians took over the industry they continued to produce essentially Egyptian pottery for several hundred years. Napatan and even early Meroitic wares are not easily distinguished from those of contemporary Egypt, and they show hardly a trace of decorative embellishment. It is not until the late Meroitic Period, perhaps around A.D. 200, that pottery making abruptly reemerges as one of the great decorative arts of the Nubians.

The origins of the late Meroitic pottery industry are an enduring mystery. It seems to spring into being full-blown, with an astonishing profusion of vessel forms and an exuberant decorative style, without any recognizable antecedents either in Nubia or abroad. The manufacturing technology (potter's wheel, updraught kiln, and the use of fine residual clays) is recognizably Egyptian, and many of the decorative elements are likewise derived from the art of Pharaonic times, while the vessel forms are mostly of Greek derivation. Yet one

*Fig. 95. Ring-flask with guilloche pattern and floral design (Cat. 225), Meroitic Period, first to second century A.D. (London 51477).*

130 looks in vain to Graeco-Roman Egypt for specific antecedents to the Meroitic industry. The Egyptian wares of Ptolemaic and Roman times exhibit only a fraction of the decorative complexity of the Meroitic wares. One is forced to conclude that the Nubians achieved a unique local synthesis of what were, individually, foreign artistic influences.

Meroitic pottery occurs in a truly amazing variety of forms, including cups, goblets, bowls, all kinds of small bottles, jugs, amphorae, and large and small jars. The finest of these are made exclusively from residual clays and have walls of almost eggshell thinness. Vessels most commonly have a cream, buff, or tan exterior, with painted decoration making balanced or alternating use of black and red (Fig. 95; Cats. 220, 225, 232, 234, 236, 237,

241, 243, 246, 248, 250-255). Somewhat less common is a polished red ware, usually undecorated but sometimes with designs in black and white (Fig. 96; Cats. 219, 224, 227, 229, 245, 249). Still a third group of vessels is pink in color, with decoration chiefly in black (Cats. 221-223, 257, 258).

Meroitic decoration consists mostly of concentric bands of friezes, of which there may be as many as five running side by side around the same pot. Both geometric and representational designs are employed (Fig. 97); among the latter one can recognize such familiar motifs from ancient Egyptian art as the *ankh*-sign (symbol of life), the lotus flower, the uraeus serpent with sun-disk crown, the crocodile, and various birds (Cats. 223, 227, 234, 241, 243, 246, 252, 254). A unique decorative element

Fig. 96. Vessel with altars and geese (Cat. 224), Meroitic Period, second to third century A.D. (Philadelphia E. 8157).





in Meroitic pottery is the caricatured human face.

After two or three centuries, the Meroitic pottery industry disappeared almost as abruptly and mysteriously as it had begun. This was concurrent in Lower Nubia with the collapse of the Meroitic empire and its replacement by the Ballana monarchy (see Chapter 7). The sudden change in pottery was once regarded as evidence that the people of Ballana times were a new group of invaders in Lower Nubia, but it now seems more probable that they were the direct descendants of the Meroitic people. It remains true nevertheless that Ballana pottery shows very little connection with Meroitic pottery.

There is no mystery as to the origin of the Ballana wares; they represent the temporary, complete triumph of

Roman influence in Nubian pottery. Nearly all the Ballana vessel forms — cups, goblets, bowls, and small bottles — can be found not only in Roman and Byzantine Egypt, but in nearly every corner of the Roman Empire (Fig. 98). Like most late Roman pottery, the Nubian Ballana wares were overwhelmingly red in color, and very few of them had elaborate decoration. A few goblet forms, however, regularly exhibit very simple black and white festoons, spots, and splashes which are a purely Nubian innovation (Cat. 285). On the other hand, the Nubian wares lack entirely the elaborate stamped and molded decoration which is the hallmark of Roman *terra sigillata*.

The preference for undecorated red wares carried over from Ballana to early Christian times, though there

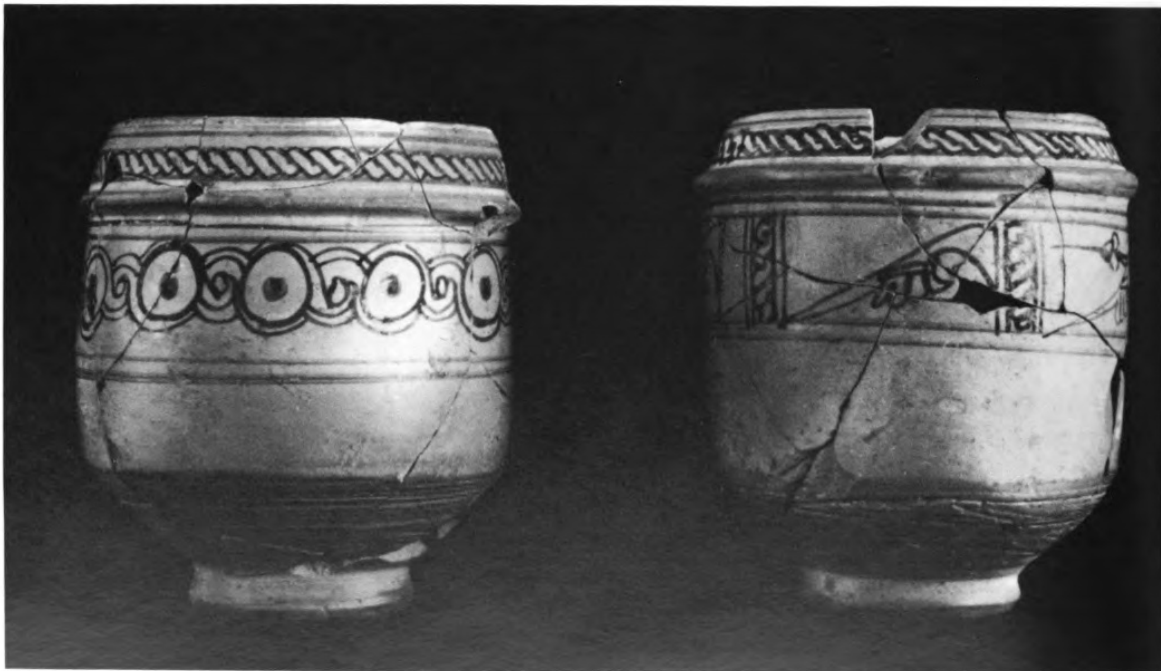
Fig. 97. Beaker with scene of curly-haired man and large dog (Cat. 233), Meroitic Period, probably second century A.D. (Philadelphia E. 8451).





*Fig. 98. Ballana vessels, whose forms reflect the strong influence of Roman pottery, Ballana Period, fifth or sixth century A.D. (Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).*

*Fig. 99. Bright orange bowls with brown painted decoration, Christian Period, probably ninth or eleventh century A.D. (Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).*





was some change in the prevailing vessel forms, as there was also in Egypt at the same time. In the middle of the ninth century, however, there was an abrupt revival of exuberant decoration and of the use of bright colors. The "Classic Christian" wares bear numerous and startling resemblances to the Meroitic wares of five hundred years earlier, but their inspiration actually came not from the earlier industry but from contemporary Coptic manuscript illumination.

The later Christian wares represent the final flowering of the potter's art in Nubia, and in their way they are as distinctive as anything that preceded them. The vessels are mostly white, yellow, or bright orange, often with a glossy, almost luminous polish. Painted decoration is usual and is chiefly in black, though there is some use of red filling in the designs. The most characteristic forms are large bowls and vases, which were unknown in earlier periods (Fig. 99).

Painted decoration in Christian Nubian pottery, as in Meroitic pottery, consists in part of geometric and in

part of representational designs. Among the latter are birds, animals, fish, snakes, and various floral motifs (Cat. 294). In time, however, representational designs were largely dropped, while geometric decoration became more and more ornate and "frilly" (Fig. 100). In general, these developments are paralleled by contemporary trends in manuscript illumination, which was evidently a continuing source of inspiration for the Christian Nubian potters.

The late Christian Period (ca. A.D. 1300-1500) was a time of unrest and strife within Nubia. At the end of this period, amazing as it seems, the use of the potter's wheel seems actually to have been given up. The handmade wares, which had been relegated to a minor position since C-group times, enjoyed a brief final renaissance; they were once again made in great profusion and were embellished with both painted and incised decoration. In modern times, however, the availability of imported factory-made pottery has sounded the final knell to what was for centuries one of Nubia's most distinctive arts.

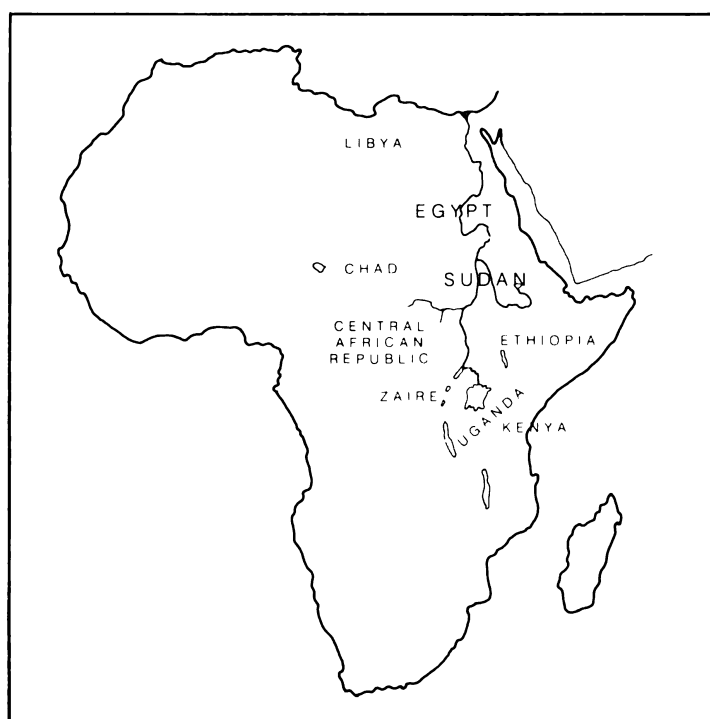
*Fig. 100. Large bright orange vase decorated with ornate black painted geometric designs, Christian Period, twelfth century A.D. (Khartoum, Sudan National Museum).*





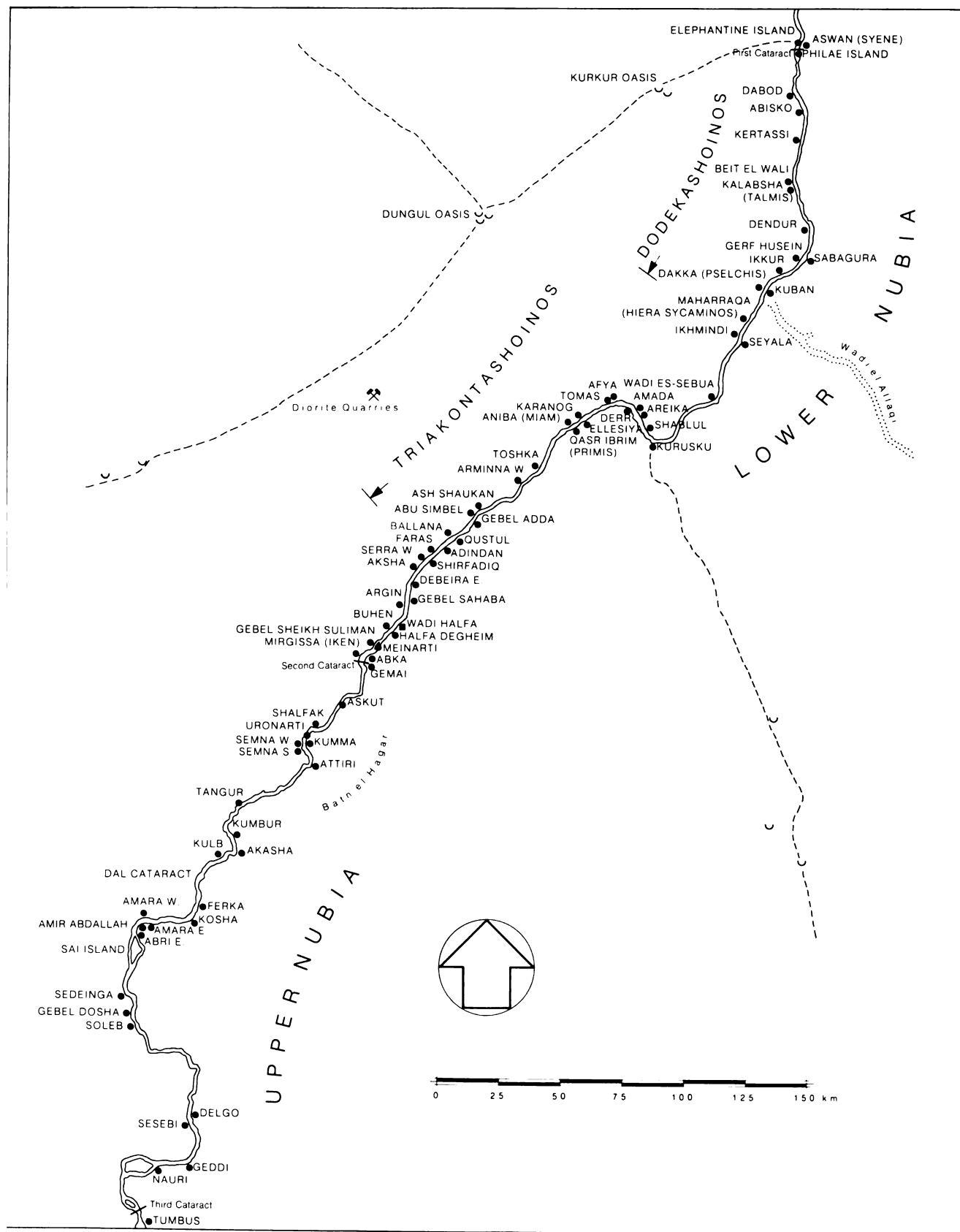


## Maps

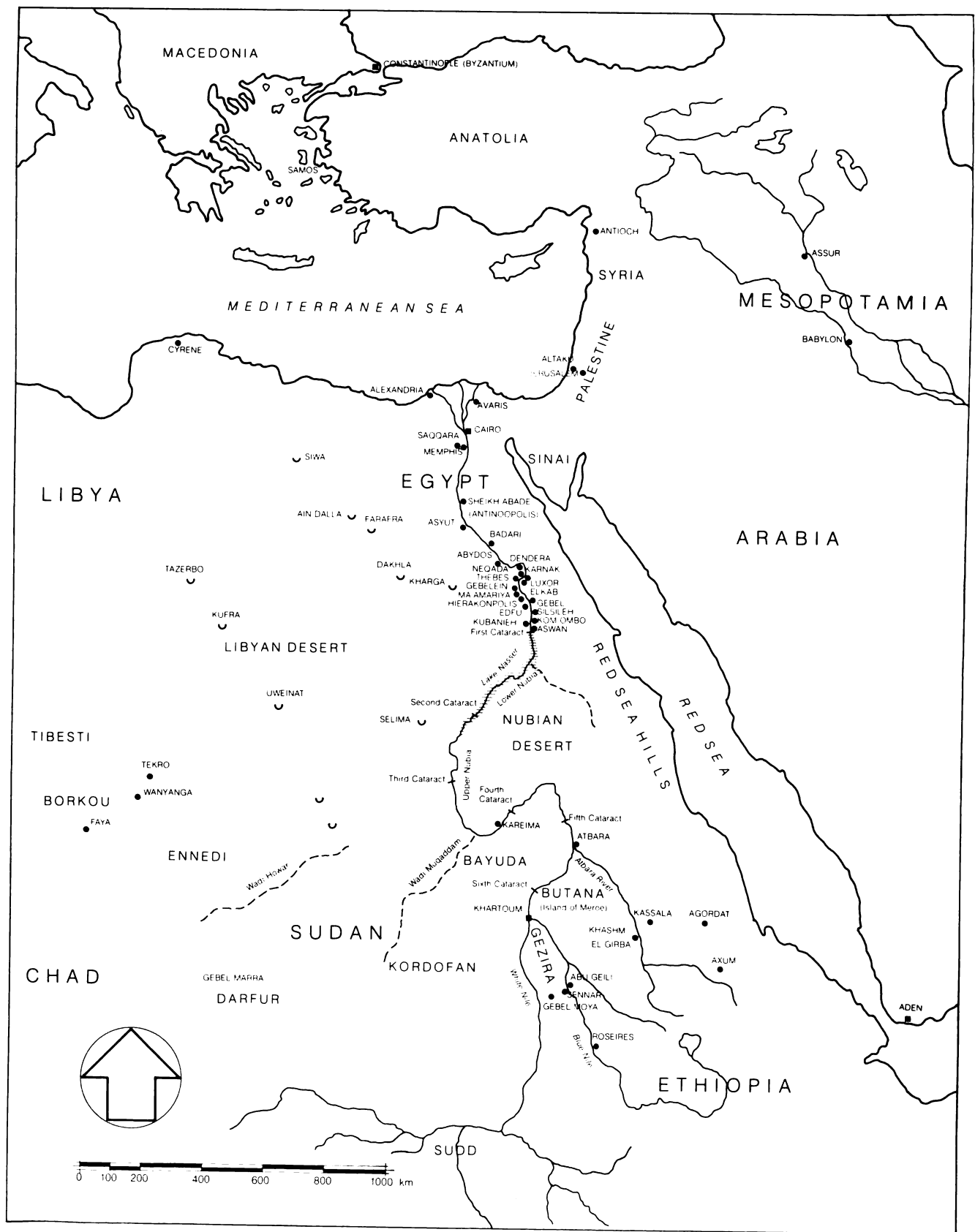




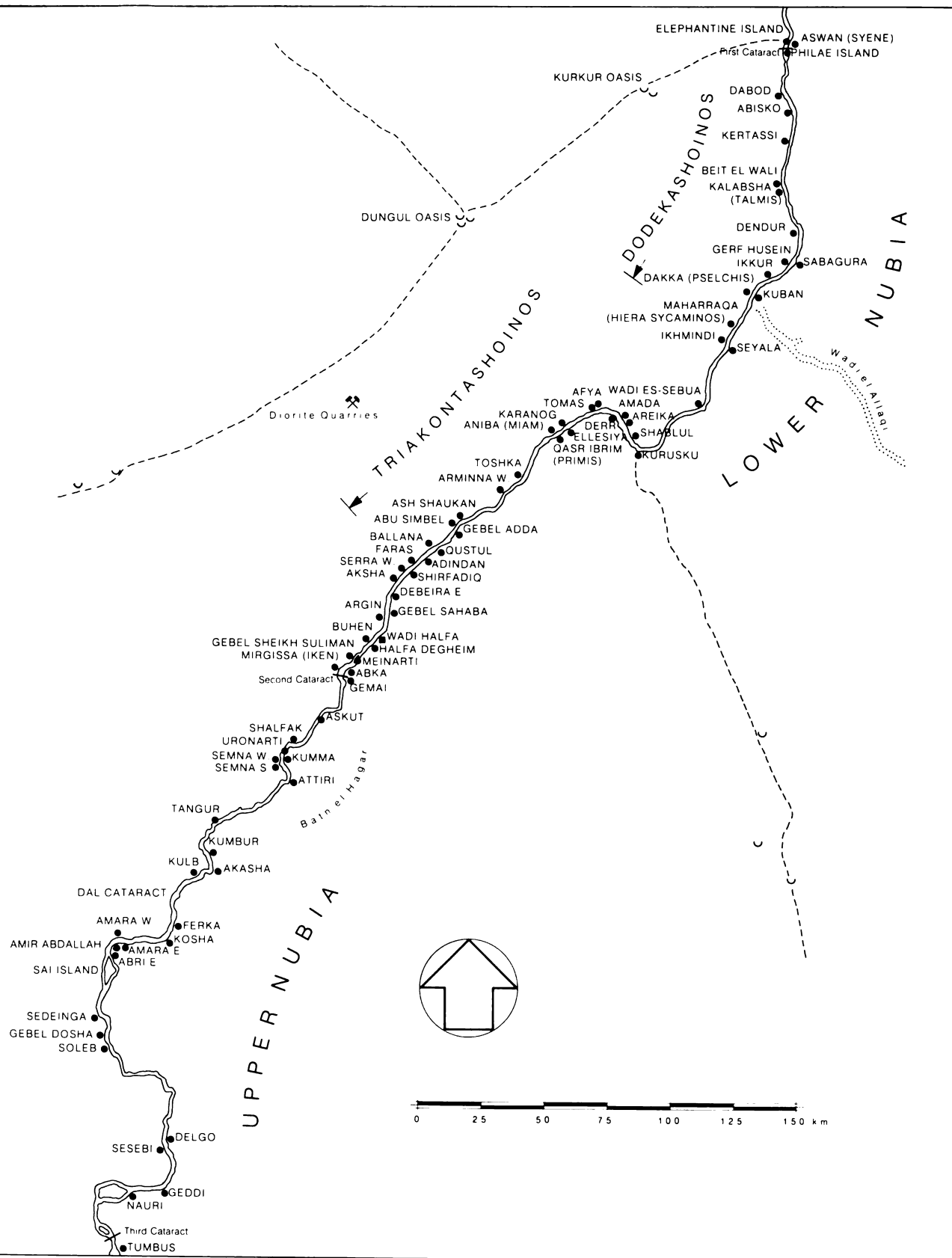




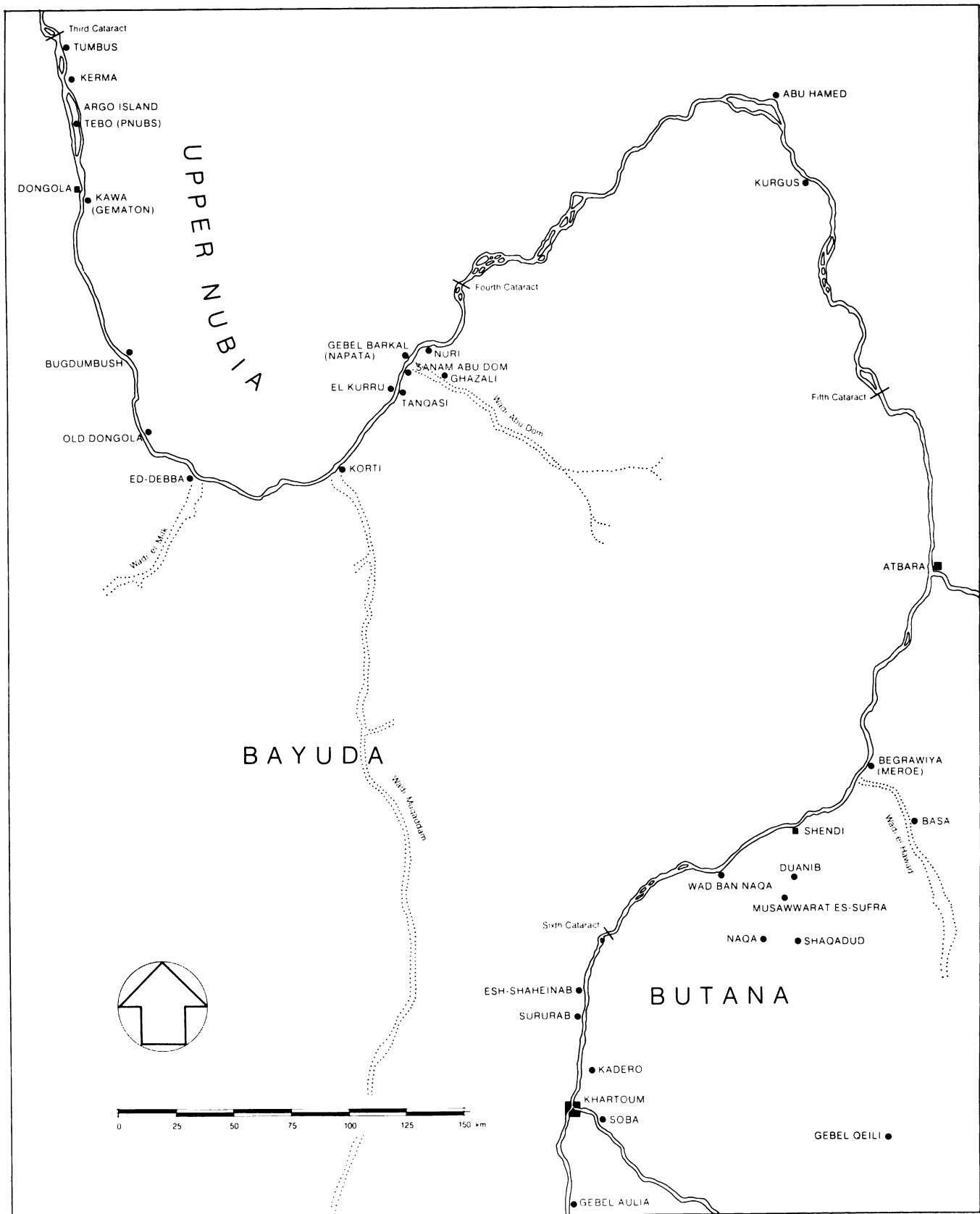
Maps







Maps





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143

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